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Senior Executive Learning Agility Development Based On Self-Discovery: An Action Research Study In Executive Coaching

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***Senior Executive Learning Agility Development Based On Self-Discovery: An Action
Research Study In Executive Coaching***

BY

Suzanne Goebel

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Of

Executive Doctorate in Business

In the Robinson College of Business

Of

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

ROBINSON COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

2013

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ACCEPTANCE

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

List of Abbreviations (in Alphabetical Order)

CL – Complex Learning
CV – Competing Values
CVF – Competing Values Framework
EC – Executive Coaching
ELD – Executive Leader Development
ICF – International Coach Federation
LA – Learning Agility
LP – Leadership Pipeline

Definitions (in Alphabetical Order)

Change Agility - A dimension of the Korn/Ferry¹ learning agility construct. Change agility is defined as ‘people who are curious, have a passion for ideas, like to experiment with test cases and engage in skill-building activities.’

Competing Values Framework (CVF) – Use of this term in the research aligns with the concepts defined in the Competing Values Framework; viz., a framework that involves four quadrants where the values represented in each quadrant inherently compete with each other. The four competing values are Collaborate, Compete, Control and Create.

Complex Learning- For purposes of this research the term refers to a set of concepts that involve higher-level mental agility and capacities, including metacognition, reflective judgment, reflection and paradox integration.

Executive Leader Development – The process whereby an individual with management authority learns/grows/develops in such a way as to be able to successfully accomplish the roles and responsibilities of executive leadership. Appropriate diagnosis is underscored as a precursor to development and growth.

¹ From the Korn/Ferry website, www.kornferry.com, “Since our inception, clients have trusted Korn/Ferry to help them recruit world-class leadership talent. Building on this heritage, today we are a single source for a wide range of leadership and talent consulting services.’ They are also the exclusive provider of the Lominger leadership products and services. Lominger is a combined name from Lombardo and Eichinger, pioneers and researchers in the field.

Leadership/Leader- For purposes of this research, the definition of leadership/leader is confined to the constructs in the CVF; that is, management authority and style that are characterized by one or more of the Competing Values: Compete, Collaborate, Create, and Control. Each is further defined in the study.

Leadership Pipeline – This term is used to describe executives or potential executives in an organization who are being developed via various alternatives(Drotter & Charan, 2001), and who can be identified and assessed as to their capacity to successfully navigate each career crossroad. Primary constructs under review in this research include the leaders' perspective on time from two angles: 1) future time span-how far ahead does the leader ponder and 2) use of time- how does the leader use time

Learning Agility - (Korn/Ferry, 2011) – “the ability and willingness to learn from experience and apply that learning to perform successfully in new situations”.

Learning Agility Development - For purposes of this research learning agility development is broadly defined as including 1) evidence of application of learning agility traits to existing situations, 2) changes with respect competing values/paradox integration in any direction (meaning a regression in one quadrant may demonstrate growth and development, and 3) the expression of thoughts and ideas that are equivalent to the key learning agility constructs and concepts.

Lominger Diagnostic Map – A comprehensive mapping from the Lominger research(Michael M Lombardo & Eichinger, 2001), which includes specific dimensions of learning agility and their relative importance.

Mental Agility - A dimension of the Korn/Ferry learning agility construct, defined as ‘people who think through problems from a fresh point of view and are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity, and explaining their thinking to others.’

Metacognition – ‘ Metacognition is defined as cognition about cognition", or "knowing about knowing."[\[1\]](#)
It can take many forms; it includes knowledge about when and how to use particular strategies for

learning or for problems solving There are generally two components of metacognition: knowledge about cognition, and regulation of cognition'. www.wikipedia.com .

Paradox Integration - Specifically for this research, the term involves the ability to harmonize otherwise competing concepts. As used herein, the competing values used in CVF are addressed (compete, collaborate, create and control). The outcome of paradox integration is often a new concept which embodies elements from each of the otherwise competing concepts

People Agility – A dimension of the Korn/Ferry learning agility construct, defined as ‘people who know themselves well, learn from experience, treat others constructively, and are cool and resilient under the pressures of change.’

Reflective Judgment – A conceptual framework for understanding the process of knowing. It is defined in more detail as part of literature review.

Reflexivity – From www.wikipedia.com , producing immediate response; referring back to the subject of having an object equal to the subject. Further definition for purposes of this research includes the synergy of coach/participant exchange and how it elicits critical moments of insight/shift and contributes to momentum, helping to reveal explicit learning from tacit knowledge. All of this is seen as related to the complexity around ‘knowing’.

Results Agility - A dimension of the Korn/Ferry learning agility construct, defined as ‘people who get results under tough conditions, inspire others to perform beyond normal, and exhibit the sort of presence that builds confidence in others’

Self-Awareness - For purposes of this research, it includes the generally accepted definition of the capacity for introspection, but goes beyond introspection relative to affect and feelings. It also includes self-awareness about behaviors and cognitive/belief issues.

Self-Discovery – For purposes of this research, the meaning is limited to those ideas/concepts/thoughts that one discovers for him/herself through a facilitated process of executive coaching. It is not so much

what a person discovers about affective elements of self as it is about discovery related to cognitive and belief processes, though the former may surface. The important thing is that insight happens, an aha moment that causes the person to embrace something heretofore unknown or unaware; it is discovered *by* the person, akin to a eureka moment.

Senior Executives – Organizational leaders who function in senior leadership or C-suite roles. C-suite includes CEO, CFO, CIO, CLO, etc.—the ‘chiefs’. Individuals at this level typically contribute to ‘managing the enterprise’.

ABSTRACT

While there is an abundance of empirically based information on the broad subject of executive leadership and executive leader development, opportunity for further research is driven by complexity of the executive’s world and the related need to function at high levels of learning agility. In fact, learning agility has been identified by Korn/ Ferry (Korn/Ferry, 2011) as the single most important predictor of executive success.

This study seeks to explore non-traditional forms of executive leader development based on an integrated theoretical lens, including learning and executive development theories as they relate to learning agility. Executive Coaching is of primary interest as an executive development theory, with a diagnostic element designed to provide insight about development issues, particularly those around leadership pipeline cross points.

The Competing Values Framework, as applied here for individual executive growth and development constructs, offers an additional theoretical lens as well as a structure for practical application. Using an engaged scholarship approach through Action Research, this is explored with a focus on executive development options that go beyond traditional leadership training models, and with research, insights analyzed through the CVF assessment and structured interviews.

Among the findings are insights which confirm the learning agility construct claims that it is a key predictor to executive success as executives traverse career transitions. More specifically, the insights which proceed from this study also support the reasons that self-discovery learning interventions impact learning agility for senior executives. They include:

1. The Participants in this study demonstrated Learning Agility Development as defined for this research, providing evidence that Learning Agility can be developed
2. Executive Coaching and Related Self-Discovery Constructs contribute more to Learning Agility Executive Development when the executive coach offers a fluid approach which includes significant engagement and mutual dialog as well as inquiry.
3. Learning Agility Development is related to one's ability to manage Competing Values, especially Competing Values that are unique to the individual.
4. Individual Awareness, its connection to reflexivity, and the movement of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is a key finding related to senior executive learning agility development.
5. A Systems Approach to Learning Agility Executive Development which includes a systemic framework, a defined process/structure, and individual customization is indicated for senior level executives.

The study offers extensions to existing theories as well as a practical theory-and-findings-based executive development methodology.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Domain

The subject of executive development and its related fields of learning and growth comprise the central theme of this research. The scope of the research is bounded by the constructs of learning agility, executive development, learning theories and executive coaching, with a focus on assessment/diagnosis as well as developmental growth. Further, the research addresses the individual executive and does not extend to organizational performance. The integrated theoretical lens serves as the foundation of this research, with specific emphasis on an extension of the Competing Values Framework to address individual executive development along with use of the Korn/Ferry learning agility constructs.

1.2 Research Question

In their article *Learning Agility: A Construct Whose Time Has Come*, De Meuse, Dai and Hallenbeck (K.P. De Meuse, Dai, & Hallenbeck, 2010) discuss areas for further exploration and research. They state explicitly '*another issue for exploration is why some individuals are more learning agile than others. Understanding such reasons will improve the assessment of learning agility. Further it should help us predict how much learning agility can be developed in an individual and what the most efficient ways for its development are*'. This research is partly 'the further exploration' encouraged by De Meuse, Dai and Hallenbeck.

As noted in the definition section, learning agility is defined as 'the ability and willingness to learn from experience and apply that learning to perform successfully in new situations'(Korn/Ferry, 2011). Also, according to Korn/Ferry, 'agile learners tend to know what to do when they don't know what to do. They are today and tomorrow's most successful leaders'. Further, learning agility and a key related construct, dealing with ambiguity, is the single most important predictive factor for executive success according to Korn/Ferry's diagnostic research(M. M. a. E. Lombardo, Robert, 2003). Finally, learning agility includes

four related dimensions: Mental Agility, People Agility, Change Agility and Results Agility (Korn/Ferry, 2011).

Related to the learning agility construct and its connection to executive performance are the domains of executive development and complex learning, both of which include the implicit and underlying assumption that learning agility can be developed as suggested by De Meuse, Dai and Hallenbeck (K.P. De Meuse et al., 2010).

Jones, Rafferty & Griffin (Jones, Rafferty, & Griffin, 2006) refer to research which indicates that up to 50% of people in executive positions fail at some point in their career. Confirming this trend, Eichinger & Lombardo (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2004) support the claim of a 33%-75% failure rate of first time top executives. The derailment research further indicates that both successful and unsuccessful executives rate high in intelligence and achievement; the difference was found to be flexibility and adaptability (K.P. De Meuse et al., 2010). These statements support the need for creative developmental approaches at all levels, but especially at the executive level.

Quoting David Rock's 2010 paper (Rock, 2010),

'A study in 2008 found that 'improving leadership development' was the second most urgent issue for HR people, after talent management (Boston Consulting Group, 2008). Nearly two thirds of organizational change efforts fail, or at best deliver average results (Beer and Nohria, 2000). The evidence points to the need to do better at developing leaders and managers at all levels'

Hence, the quest for development options that transcend traditional leadership training models is an emerging trend.

Regarding complex learning, self-discovery models, which include inquiry, reflective judgment, reflection and metacognition, are gaining momentum in executive development circles. To state the obvious and connect the dots, Brown and Posner (L. M. Brown & Posner, 2001) note a relationship

between learning and executive development. This study suggests that executive learning is a more complex process than many of the general learning theories address. According to Antonacopoulou and Benito (Antonacopoulou & Bento, 2004), “teaching leadership might transmit knowledge, but would not aid in the development of leaders.” A possible explanation may be inadequate assessment regarding development issues and obstacles. One supplemental learning alternative for leadership development, for example, is learning from prior experience (Day, Zaccaro, & Halpin, 2004), a concept that aligns closely with learning agility. However, failure to do so is something that is diagnosable.

In addition, Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro & Reiter-Palmon (Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro, & Reiter-Palmon, 2000) suggest a multi-faceted approach to executive development and related learning activities.

One example of a more robust learning alternative for leaders is Executive Coaching where ‘a common comparison for leader learning contrasts training and executive coaching: In such cases, training was seen as ‘low level learning’ while coaching was seen as dealing with transformation’ (Eggers & Clark, 2000). The problem remains: finding complex and comprehensive learning alternatives for executives.

Summarizing the key introductory points builds a solid argument for the importance of the research question. We find that 1) executive development around learning agility needs exploration, 2) up to 50% of people in executive positions fail at some point in their career, and 3) improving leadership development is an urgent issue for HR people. Hence, the explicit need to address this research question:

RQ: Why do self-discovery learning interventions impact learning agility for Senior Executive Development?

1.3 Research Methodology and Perspective

The research methodology for this project is action research.

'Action research is an established research method in use in the social and medical sciences since the mid-twentieth century. Toward the end of the 1990's it began growing in popularity for use in scholarly investigations of information systems. The method produces highly relevant research results, because it is grounded in practical action, aimed at solving an immediate problem situation while carefully informing theory. Throughout the decade, calls persisted for improved relevance in information systems research [Keen 1991 and Westfall 1999]. The lack of relevance in IS research spurred much of the increased interest in action research' (R. L. Baskerville, 1999) .

The most prevalent action research description (Susman & Evered, 1978) details a five phase, cyclical process. The approach first requires the establishment of a client-system infrastructure or research environment. The identifiable phases are: Phase 1: Diagnosing , Phase 2: Action Planning, Phase 3: Action Taking , Phase 4: Evaluating, Phase 5: Specifying Learning .

In addition to the cyclical nature, a key construct in Action Research is that of intervention, noted above in item 3, action taking. The intervention is designed to change the business problem, allowing for evaluation of the intervention responses (and subsequent revision). (Van de Ven, 2007).

Baskerville (R. Baskerville, Wood-Harper, Informatics, & Accounting, 1996), notes that the action researcher is focused on introducing changes to complex social processes and then observing outcomes. Such an approach implies an interpretivist view of the research as well as qualitative data and analysis. Because of intervention by the researcher, the researcher is part of the study. Such subjectivity automatically suggests qualitative data and qualitative interpretation.

1.4 Organization of Paper

The chapters below further reflect the organization of this research:

- **Chapter 2 Literature Review** – This chapter addresses the multiple literature streams which frame the research. Specifically, the literature around the following themes of learning

- agility, senior executive development, executive coaching, and such complex learning constructs as reflective judgment and metacognition are reviewed and summarized.
- **Chapter 3 The Theoretical Framework** – Chapter three is focused on the theoretical framework, a framework which incorporates the multiple literature streams through a process model. The three key processes which frame the research are complex learning, executive development and learning agility, all of which can be viewed as processes and may contain certain sub-processes. The processes are further viewed through the various constructs which serve to provide boundaries as well as descriptions and definitions.
 - **Chapter 4 Research Design** – This chapter covers the research design, a design based on the principles of Action Research. The use of Action Research is supported along with the use of certain tools in the research. For example, The Competing Values Assessment is used as an observation tool in the Action Research cycles, the appropriate use of which is supported in Chapter 4. This chapter also outlines the research setting, including the client system infrastructure/research participants. Finally, it connects the action planning and related action research cycles to the theoretical framework.
 - **Chapter 5 Data Collection and Analysis** – Chapter 5 provides the foundation for the remainder of the dissertation because it outlines how the data was collected and analyzed. As purported in the research proposal, the data collection approach involved a series of interviews and executive coaching sessions as well as an assessment process. Subsequent to data collection, analysis was performed using best practice qualitative data analysis procedures, the details of which are contained in Chapter 5.
 - **Chapter 6 Results** – This chapter presents raw data findings, summarized and formatted for further analysis and subsequent discussion. Input from each participant via the interviews, executive coaching sessions and competing values assessments is presented in some detail. In

addition, a composite view of the data is provided in terms of themes/coding and observations with respect to competing values.

- **Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusions** – Chapter 7 begins the interpretive section of the research. Details are reviewed in light of meaning and sense making, providing a perspective from the researcher's point of view as well as from the literature. Beginning with the original interest and following the research process through its final phases, the approach, findings and insights are discussed in depth.
- **Chapter 8 Contributions and Future Research** – Based on the findings and discussion in Chapter 7, contributions to theory and practice are outlined in Chapter 8, along with recommendations for future research. Contributions to theory and practice include two theoretical extensions and one methodology contribution to the field of Executive Development. Opportunities for future research are suggested to further explore some of the findings as well as create new streams of literature. Limitations and alternative explanations are also discussed here.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature Stream: Learning Agility and Senior Executive Development

Reinforcing the notion that learning agility is a key performance indicator to executive success, Lombardo and Eichinger (M.M. Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000) suggest that ‘to deal with change, organizations need to find and nurture those who are most facile in dealing with it’. Their research also defines four learning agility factors as previously noted: people agility, results agility, mental agility, and change agility. Of these four factors, the one we are most interested in for purposes of this research is Mental Agility, for reasons related to the research itself: A study which embodies the processes of mental processes and complex learning. Second in importance to this research is change agility due to its strong connection to the basic definition of learning agility: “the ability and willingness to learn from experience and apply that learning to perform successfully in new situations”

Other significant components of learning agility are mentioned by Jones, et al (Jones et al., 2006), who notes traits that refer to one’s ability to manage complexity an uncertainty, to tolerate ambiguity and to anticipate change. The implications regarding flexibility, resilience and adaptability are clear. As a matter of clarification, Eichinger & Lombardo (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2004) say that ‘learning agility measures throw doubt on the common argument that learning agility is a surrogate for IQ or personality variables...’. Rather, they purport ‘learning agility is more related to performing better once promoted’. A bottom line summary is that high potential is not necessarily related to high past performance.

Regarding promotion and performance, learning agility, again by its definition, is relevant to the leadership pipeline. As noted in *its* definition, the leadership pipeline refers to different career crossroads where an individual moves from managing oneself through six transitions, finally reaching the highest level of managing an enterprise (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2011). Of importance here are two points:

1. This research focuses on the top three levels i.e., executive levels: From Functional Manager to Business Manager, From Business Manager to Group Manager, From Group Manager to Enterprise Manager.
2. The shifts at each level involve several dimensions, though the use of time and one's future orientation is of primary interest.

The executive coaching intervention, at least in Cycle 1, addresses these shifts from a diagnostic perspective (what has helped or hindered current executive success) as well as development. The coaching also probes behaviors and beliefs that relate to learning agility's mental and change sub-dimensions.

While significant literature exists for the broader construct of 'leadership development', research which addresses development at the top three executive levels is more limited. In their book, *The Leadership Pipeline*, Charan, Drotter and Noel (Charan et al., 2011) provide extensive information about the shifts required as one moves through the pipeline, but little with regard to developmental methodology. The exception is their chapter on coaching which promotes the model as appropriate for learning and development.

Among other learning agility traits mentioned by Eichinger & Lombardo (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2004) are: enjoyment of complex, first-time problems, interest in self-awareness, willingness to learn from feedback, and resilience. Receptivity to feedback is also supported as a strong senior leadership potential factor by Rogers and Smith (Rogers & Smith, 2004). In their article '*Spotting Executive Potential and Future Senior Leaders*', they connect learning agility to a 'receptivity to feedback'. They report that learning agile individuals are 'more at ease with the idea of reinventing themselves—they see themselves as continuously evolving and are constantly looking to improve'.

De Meuse, Dai and Hallenbeck (K.P. De Meuse et al., 2010) make an important point about executive development. They provide a foundational construct referred to as transitions:

'In the world of leadership, management transitions play a major role. Transitions are challenging and developmental because individuals are in such complex circumstances, faced with novel situations that render existing routines and leadership behaviors inadequate. Transitions require the flexibility to learn new ways....A relatively new construct, entitled learning agility, has increasingly been recognized as essential for long term leadership success.'

Learning agility and its connection to executive development demand alternative learning strategies as well. By definition, learning agility involves learning from experience, a construct that is part of such learning modalities as action learning and executive coaching. Despite the comprehensive work on learning agility by Lombardo and Eichinger and Korn/Ferry through their acquisition of the Lominger tools, a Google scholar search on the phrase 'learning agility research' returns only four articles. The field is wide open for research.

Because learning agility with all of its related components is so predictive of executive success and because executive derailment is so prevalent (Jones et al., 2006), it follows that a study such as this which explores learning interventions impacting senior executive learning agility will make an important contribution to the body of literature and to practice.

2.2 Literature Stream: Executive Coaching

One alternative to traditional training is Executive Coaching. By comparison to other learning and development modalities, executive coaching is relatively new and therefore without significant empirical evidence around outcomes. Hartley and Hinksman (Hartley & Hinksman, 2003) suggest that the executive coaching model is used as development model for senior managers 'rather than a wider team of leaders'. They further state that

'executive coaching has been expanding over the last decade. Some writers have seen this activity as highly pertinent as a component of leader development. There is still insufficient

empirical research which examines how it occurs, what happens during coaching that supports leader development, when it is successful, why it is successful in some settings (and possibly not in others), who makes a good coach (and why), and what sort of leader benefits most from coaching.'

Whitmore (Whitmore, 2009) used the term 'inner game coaches' and create the following executive coaching definition: 'unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. **It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.**'

While there are variations on the definition of executive coaching, it is readily accepted that the construct is rooted in psychotherapy, management consulting and self-directed/discovered learning. Its prominence beginning in the early 1980's is attributed to the Tri-Source Group. According to Machan (Machan, 1988), , this group integrated psychotherapy and management consulting into the earliest deliveries of executive coaching.

The International Coach Federation (from its website www.coachfederation.org)

'adheres to a form of coaching that honors the leader as the expert in his/her life and work and believes that every person is creative, resourceful and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to discover, clarify and align with what the leader wants to achieve; encourage leader self-discovery; elicit leader-generated solutions and strategies; hold the leader responsible and accountable.'

This definition strongly confirms an inquiry approach, self-awareness and a strong action/experience bias for development and learning. The International Coach Federation is one of the earlier professional associations for executive coaching. As such, it has also provided a set of skills and competencies, a selection of which is relevant to this research and provided in the Appendix. Included there are those coaching competencies which focus on, inquiry, self-awareness, and action/experience , a construct supported in the Korn/Ferry definition of learning agility: "**the ability and willingness to learn from experience and apply that learning to perform successfully in new situations**"

As for the goals of executive coaching, a few relate to this research on learning agility for senior executive development. Among them are: flexibility, adaptability and resilience. Jones (Jones et al., 2006) report that leader flexibility is indeed one goal of executive coaching and that this flexibility includes both adaptability and resilience. The connection of these constructs to learning agility are confirmed again through the Korn/Ferry research (Korn/Ferry, 2011). In fact, according to the Korn/Ferry Diagnostic Map (Michael M Lombardo & Eichinger, 2001), the top four competencies that relate to learning agility are, in order, Dealing with Ambiguity, Problem Solving, Learning on the Fly, and Perspective.

The benefits of executive coaching include learning: Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (Sheila Kampa-Kokesch & Mary Z. Anderson, 2001) referenced research by Olivero where results supported increased learning from executive coaching. In fact, they note, 'knowledge increased at a higher rate after training *and* coaching than after training alone.'

Turner (Turner, 2006) adds more relevance to the construct of executive coaching and its relationship to learning when she talks about two important elements: expanded thinking through dialog with a coach and learning on the spot. Both are significant where improved learning agility is a desired outcome.

Additional research that connects self-awareness to executive coaching is supported through the research of Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson (S. Kampa-Kokesch & M.Z. Anderson, 2001) where 45% of those survey reported increased self-awareness.

Hence, executive development is growing through executive coaching: 'Executive coaching, which surfaced as a leader development practice over a decade ago, is now among the most widely used executive leader development techniques' (McGovern et al., 2001). Such a trend is also supported in an action research study by Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997), which indicates that

'numerous factors have been identified that influence the extent to which knowledge acquired during classroom training transfers to the job. There is considerable evidence that a critical factor influencing transfer of training is the extent to which the trainee receives the opportunity for practice and constructive feedback. One- on- one executive coaching can provide this opportunity'.

2.3 Literature Stream: Reflective Judgment, Reflection and Metacognition

Connecting the power of self-discovery via coaching to the concepts of reflective judgment and reflection expands our research framework to include other and complementary alternatives to executive development. In his book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, Donald Schön (Schön, 1983) develops a significant argument for the value of reflective learning through daily actions and experiences. He treats this subjective, tacit knowledge as superior to 'technical rationality'. More importantly, he develops the argument through real life scenarios in which the reflective conversations occur, at least partially, through a series of well-crafted questions designed for reframing.

Moreover, reflective judgment, as defined by King and Kitchener (King & Kitchener, 1994): *'the conceptual framework for relative judgment is that of a stage model characterized by seven distinct but developmentally related sets of assumptions about the process of knowing (view of knowledge) and how it is acquired (justification and beliefs). Each successive set of epistemological assumptions is characterized by a more complex and effective form of justification.'*

Closely connected to adult cognitive development and wisdom (Kitchener & Brenner, 1990), reflective judgment addresses many of the learning agility dimensions through its theories around knowing; viz.; an individual's 'good judgment in the face of uncertainty'. Such a capacity emerges from the individual's understanding of knowledge limits, the construct of certainty, and the processes of logical reasoning at the higher stages of development. It provides a framework for understanding how one makes difficult decisions about wicked problems.

Based largely on the idea of epistemic cognition (which Kitchener differentiates from cognition and metacognition), there is a place for an individual's own theory of knowledge—'a theory of how certain one can be about what we know and the criteria for knowing'. This higher-level mental process presupposes one's knowledge about the limits of knowing, and corresponds to such learning agility dimensions as 'dealing with ambiguity'. At the Stage 7 level of reflective judgment, it is argued that knowledge is constructed 'through synthesis of opposing views', a concept compatible with, if not equivalent to paradox integration. .

All of this seems to point to the likelihood that meta-thinking, high-order, and complex learning rest, at least to some degree, on the capacity to provoke reflection and reflective judgment, often through powerful questions and inquiry.

Metacognition is important as well. Veenman (Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006) note that 'metacognition was originally referred to as the knowledge about the regulation of one's cognitive activities in learning processes—per Flavell and Brown—whom they reference in their article, *'Metacognition and Learning: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations'*. Metacognitive knowledge is different from skills knowledge; the former , involves 'interactions between person, task and strategy characteristics' (Flavell, 1979), while the latter refers to 'a person's procedural knowledge for regulating one's problem solving and learning activities' (A. L. Brown & DeLoache, 1978). Of interest here is that metacognitive skills 'although moderately related to intelligence, contribute to learning performance on top of intellectual ability. On the average intellectual ability uniquely accounts for 10 percent of variance in learning, metacognitive skills uniquely account for 17 percent of variance in learning, whereas both predictors share 20 percent of variance in learning....' (Veenman, Wilhelm, & Beishuizen, 2004), (Veenman & Spaans, 2005).

A comprehensive taxonomy for organizing learning levels is Bloom's Taxonomy. According to Wikipedia, www.wikipedia.org Bloom's Taxonomy is 'a classification of learning objectives within education proposed in 1956 by a committee of educators chaired by Benjamin Bloom (who also edited the first volume of the standard text, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the Classification of Educational Goals* '). Its relevance here is due to its classification of learning, which moves from factual learning to more integrated abstractions, the latter offering a framework to observe the complex learning construct in this research and the premise that such complex learning is paramount to sustained executive development/learning agility outcomes. These are also represented in the 'paradox integration' concept, to be addressed and assessed in the action research interventions. According to Huitt (Huitt, 2004), the definitions and behaviors shown in the Appendix, Blooms Levels 5 and 6 Learning apply to these higher levels of learning. These levels 5 and 6 of Bloom's Taxonomy support Rogers and Smith's (Rogers & Smith, 2004) claim that 'the strategic skills required at the top, such as the ability to think conceptually, are much different from those needed to succeed at operations.' In fact, part of their leadership blueprint for success is a mastery of complexity. They note that 'this trait enables people to simplify complex issues'.

2.4 Literature Review: Summary and Insights

These literature streams offer two important arguments relative to the research. One, the research question itself has not been directly addressed in literature, at least through the composite construct embodied in the research question: senior executives, learning agility, executive coaching and development. Secondly, the literature stream provides a theoretical basis for the research. The table below supports this gap in practical and theoretical knowledge via specific references and quotes.

Table 2-1 Literature Review Arguments

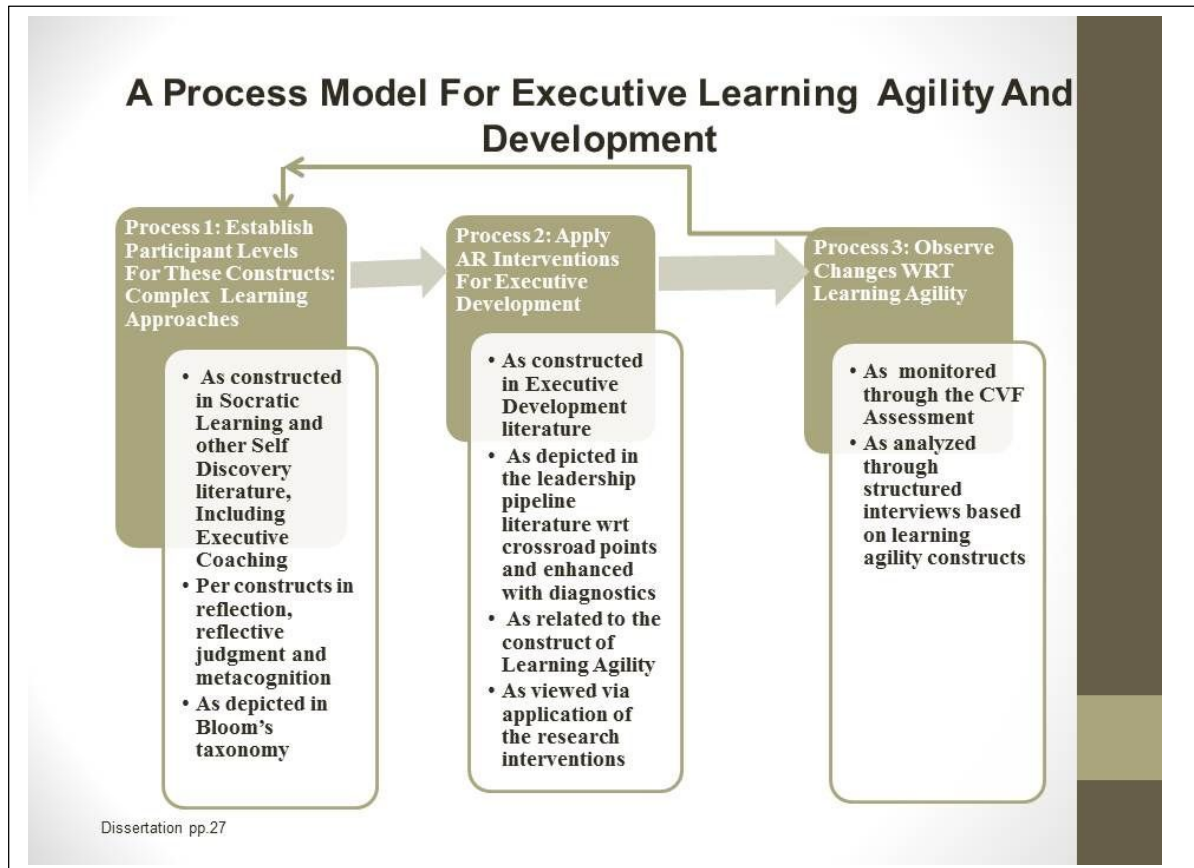
Argument	Quote From Literature Review Above	Reference
Research Gap	‘In the world of leadership, management transitions play a major role. Transitions are challenging and developmental because individuals are in such complex circumstances, faced with novel situations that render existing routines and leadership behaviors inadequate. Transitions require the flexibility to learn new ways....A relatively new construct, entitled learning agility, has increasingly been recognized as essential for long term leadership success’	(Kenneth P De Meuse et al., 2011)
Research Gap	‘Despite the comprehensive work on learning agility by Lombardo and Eichinger and Korn/Ferry through their acquisition of the Lominger tools, a Google scholar search on the phrase ‘learning agility research’ returns only four articles. The field is wide open for research.’	Scholar 4 results (0.03 sec)
Research Gap	‘executive coaching has been expanding over the last decade. Some writers have seen this activity as highly pertinent as a component of leader development. There is still insufficient empirical research which examines how it occurs, what happens during coaching that supports leader development, when it is successful, why it is successful in some settings (and possibly not in others), who makes a good coach (and why), and what sort of leader benefits most from coaching.’	(Hartley & Hinksman, 2003)
Theory Basis For Research	“learning agility is a key performance indicator to executive success”	(M.M. Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000)
Theory Basis For Research	“Other significant components of learning agility are mentioned by Jones, et al (Jones et al., 2006), who notes traits that refer to one’s ability to manage complexity an uncertainty, to tolerate ambiguity and to anticipate change”.	(Jones et al., 2006)
Theory Basis For	Turner (Turner, 2006) adds more relevance to the construct of executive coaching and its	(Turner, 2006)

Research	relationship to learning when she talks about two important elements: expanded thinking through dialog with a coach and learning on the spot. Both are significant where improved learning agility is a desired outcome.	
Theory Basis For Research	‘Connecting the power of self-discovery via coaching to the concepts of reflective judgment and reflection expands our research framework to include other and complementary alternatives to executive development. In his book, <i>The Reflective Practitioner</i> , Donald Schön (Schön, 1983) develops a significant argument for the value of reflective learning through daily actions and experiences’	(Schön, 1983)

Therefore, we see that the literature stream also reveals clarity around the practical problem, the current solutions, and the theoretical foundation for the current solutions. Regarding the practical problem, arguments in the literature clearly indicate a need for more successful, sustainable leadership and more alternatives with regard to development. Regarding the current solutions, mainly traditional ‘leadership training’ often focused on mid-level management, again, the outcomes are questionable by virtue of the persistent leadership gap, among other indicators. Regarding the theoretical foundation for the current solutions, theories often exclude the more robust complex theories which address reflection, metacognition and the like. By comparison, we see that the literature findings contribute to this research by offering the multiple lens through which the research question can be approached and a robust foundation for the Action Research process.

3 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 3-1 Conceptual Model



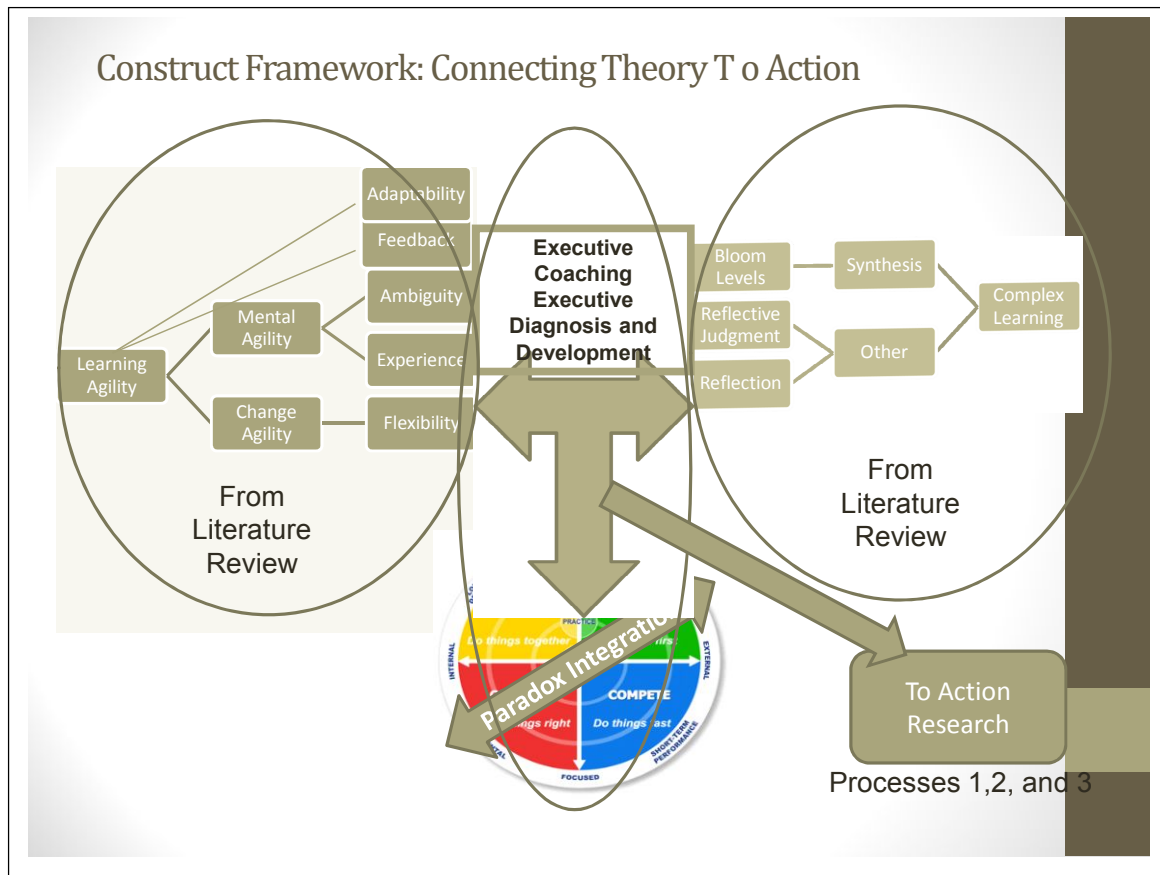
This is a process model (as different from a causal model), reflecting a process (and relevant events) of executive learning and development within the broader context of learning theories and the specific executive success predictor of learning agility.

As such, the model clarifies three main categories of constructs: Complex learning, executive development, and learning agility. All factors are addressed through research artifacts, including structured interviews and researcher observation diaries plus the literature review.

The importance of this model to the research lies in its capacity to conceptualize with regard to the events and to observe event impact over time. According to Robey and Newman (Robey & Newman, 1996), 'a

process research model defines different types of events that occur over time, using these as the model's basic theoretical constructs'. They also suggest that process models 'permit similarities among sequences of events to be measured' In this case, we are talking about executive learning events based on the central constructs of executive coaching and its related constructs of powerful questions, reflective judgment and reflection--and we are talking about paradox integration observation via the Competing Values Framework assessment, all complemented by structured interviews which primarily address learning agility. Use of these event-categories supports the research intentionality to explore the learning and development, as framed by the research question. Unlike a variance model which explains variation in dependent variables, process models '*describe events in the process itself and relate those events to outcomes*' (Robey & Newman, 1996). Our use of a process model aligns with these concepts, providing for an appropriate mental map to conceptualize and conduct the research. The theoretical framework and constructs are shown below.

Figure 3-2 Composite Theoretical Lens For Framing Action Research



3.1 Summary of Theoretical Constructs

Table 3-1 Summary of Constructs

Theory/Model	Key Concepts	References
Executive Development	Executive leader development has traditionally occurred via training events and opportunities; Alternative options and related research is growing	(McGovern et al., 2001)
Complex Learning	Level 5 and 6 learning as defined in Bloom's taxonomy—learners are able to synthesize and evaluate; development through self-discovery, Socratic models and the use of questions to elicit creativity and problem solving is a viable and proven approach; Reflection, Metacognition; Capacity to integrate opposites	(Schön, 1983), (King & Kitchener, 1994), (Kitchener & Brenner, 1990), (Veenman et al., 2006), (Flavell, 1979), (A. L. Brown & DeLoache, 1978), (Veenman et al., 2004), (Veenman & Spaans, 2005), www.wikipedia.com (Bloom's Taxonomy), (Huitt, 2004), (Rogers & Smith, 2004)
Executive Coaching	Basic definitions and constructs include an egalitarian approach where the coach facilitates leader learning through self-discovery, and leader generated solutions and strategies; leads to action, self-awareness	(Hartley & Hinksman, 2003), www.coachfederation.com , (Machan, 1988), (Whitmore, 2009), (Sheila Kampa-Kokesch & Mary Z. Anderson, 2001), (Turner, 2006), (Olivero et al., 1997)
Leadership Pipeline	The career transitions through which individuals traverse and the relevant skills/competencies needed to be successful in each of the transitions	(Charan et al., 2011)
Competing Values Framework Integration of Opposites (Paradox Integration)	The power of co-existence is possible through the synthesis of the competing values quadrants; the leader must employ both-and thinking through creative processes which integrate the opposites; addresses at least one of the learning agility dimensions: mental agility	(Cameron, 2006), (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), (Rothenberg, 1979), (Neher & Mathiassen, 2012), (Zemke, 1985)
Learning Agility	Essential to executive success; learning through experience—requires adaptability, flexibility, awareness, dealing with ambiguity, perspective, agility, etc.	(M.M. Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000), (Jones et al., 2006), (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2004), (Rogers & Smith, 2004), (K.P. De Meuse et al., 2010), (Korn/Ferry, 2011)

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Action Research Design

Baskerville (R. Baskerville et al., 1996), notes that ‘the action research literature is rather imprecise in its basic terminology. The term ‘*action research*’ is itself used, on the one hand to refer both to a general class of methods in social enquiry, and on the other hand to a specific sub-class of those methods’.

Regardless, it was originally a two-stage process, diagnosis and therapy, respectively. Later maturity and application in the Information Sciences field added breadth in terms of its goals and the utility of practical problem solving to extend science. The collaborative, participatory element combined with the cyclical nature provides a framework for sense making around the processes of social change. As such, the Action Research methodology is a solid design for this research that is focused on the ‘social change’ with respect to executive growth and development processes. Of further significant relevance is the Lewinian notion referenced in this article and quoted from [Argyris and Schön, 1991, p. 86] that ‘*causal inferences about the behavior of human beings are more likely to be valid and enactable when the human beings in question participate in building and testing them*’. Baskerville also notes that ‘action research aims for an understanding of a complex human process rather than prescribing a universal social law’. Again, appropriate for this research, where executive development is no less than a ‘complex human process’, and the aim is to understand this complex human process.

A focus on the executive development domain will allow for active involvement of the researcher along with participants, provide immediate application of knowledge, and opportunity to link theory and practice.

4.2 Application of the CVF and Use of the Korn/Ferry Learning Agility Constructs

The Competing Values Framework provides a model based on specific issues, primarily related to competing values and the executive's need to 'lead' given the competing realities. As such, it is well positioned as an application framework, and includes the added advantage of a validated assessment tool. Leader learning alternatives such as self-discovery, question-based, and reflective options will employ the competing values framework as a backdrop along with its assessment tool to observe change.

The framework itself is a method of organizing values. That said, one theoretical foundation that emerges, particularly with respect to the dichotomy of tension and harmony is the integration of paradox.

The four competing quadrants are: Create, Compete, Control and Collaborate. Each is discussed here from the book *Competing Values Leadership* (Cameron, 2006): Quadrant 1: Create – The create quadrant represents innovation, envisioning the future, Quadrant 2: Control – The control quadrant involves efficiency improvements via processes, Quadrant 3: Compete – The compete quadrant is almost self-explanatory; it focuses on aggressive pursuit of the marketplace, emphasis on speed all combined with customer focus, and Quadrant 4: Collaborate – The collaborate quadrant is mostly about building human competencies and developing people.

While this research does not extend to organizational effectiveness, it does look at individual executives with respect to their 'competing values framework'. Executives who are able to reframe and integrate as needed for strategic problem solving are considered learning agile, a concept which supports the use of the CVF in this research; viz., that outcomes from the learning interventions designed to integrate paradox can be observed using the CVF construct and assessment. For example, stronger integration of the collaborate/compete quadrants will be reflected through more yellow and red on the assessment, and connection of these outcomes to learning agility follows by way of mapping the constructs.

From the Competing Values Framework website, www.competingvalues.com , we see that the CVF can be used for numerous applications and study orientations. The same framework can be used as a lens to research and organize concepts around such things as communication, organizational style, personal style, decision making, and, for this research, executive development.

A major construct, as mentioned above, is an emergent theory from the CVF:

(www.competingvalues.com) the potential for co-existence; i.e., while the constructs of the quadrants may be different and include competing concepts, it is possible for both-and thinking². In other words, the quadrants and characteristics thereof can operate simultaneously in harmony *and* in tension. By analyzing development and learning around the CVF, we can explore the executive's development and capacity to learn to manage the competing paradoxical tensions (i.e., to integrate paradox). Such capacity is then connected to learning agility capacity, particularly with respect to adaptability, perspective, etc. The claim here is that the capacity to integrate paradox is indicative of complex learning and certain elements of learning agility. Quinn and Rohrbaugh (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983) have already shown that integration of opposites is possible and not necessarily mutually exclusive—a both/and versus an either/or paradigm is possible.

The Competing Values Framework and its corollary around 'both-and' thinking, offers a practical application in which to embed the research because of the following additional reasoning:

² Both-and thinking is rooted in Janus, the Roman god depicted with two faces, which point in opposite directions. Rothenberg (Rothenberg, 1979) stated that ' a Janusian insight occurs when someone notices the simultaneous operation of two opposing ideas or concepts'. The Janus god also accounts for the name of the first month of the year, January, which looks both backward and forward.

1) The CVF has already been used extensively with a variety of adaptations, theoretical extensions and applications. Cathy Neher (Neher & Mathiassen, 2012) used the framework to ‘explain business factors other than organizational effectiveness’, where ‘organizational effectiveness’ was defined by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981) to be ‘a value-based judgment about the performance of an organization’. Other extensions, applications and adaptations are seen in the literature. For example, according to Neher (Neher & Mathiassen, 2012) ‘CVF has been applied to management information systems (Cooper & Quinn, 1993), the influence of organizational culture in higher education institutions (Obenchain & Johnson, 2004), non-profits (Herman & Renz, 2008) and change in general (Poole & van de Ven, 1989)’.

2) The CVF lends itself to further exploration and discovery relative to executive learning and development due to the polarities/dichotomies between the CVF quadrants and the complex learning needed to integrate the polarities, as already noted, and

3) An assessment exists and can be used to measure the participant-leader’s learning outcomes via the research. Supporting the use of the assessment is Zemke’s work (Zemke, 1985) which addresses measurement of leader learning in research and confirms the connection of ‘specific learning activities’ to individual leader activities. Because executive coaching promotes executive-generated activity, it is the bridge to ‘specific learning activities’.

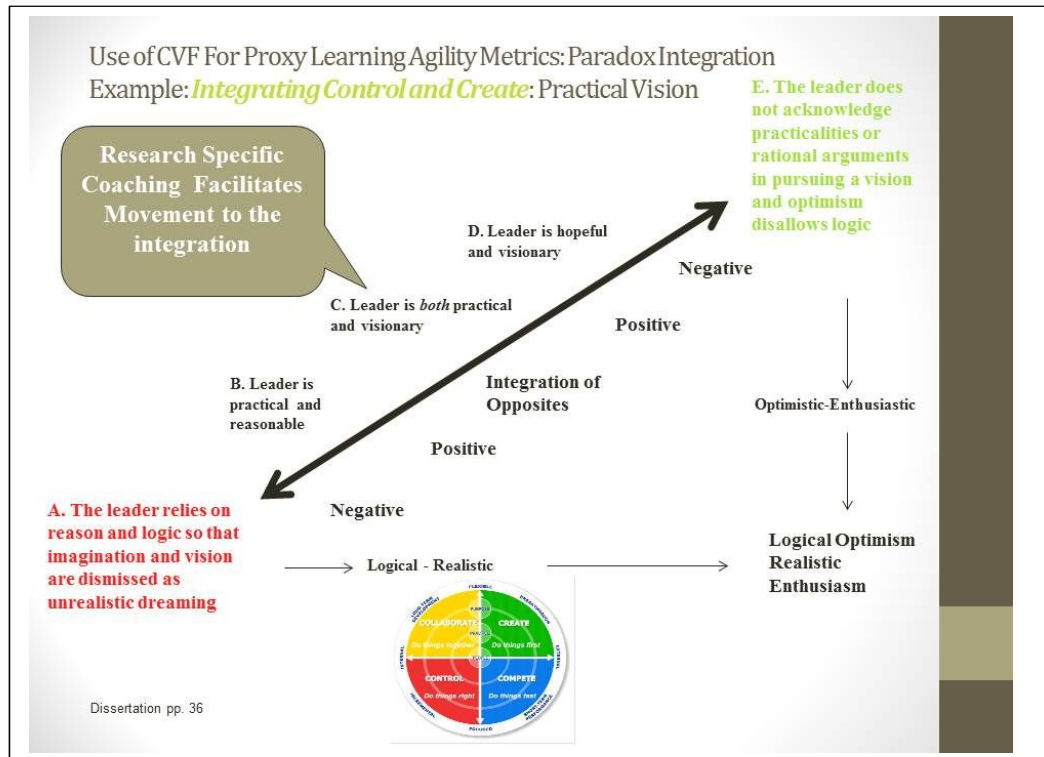
In discussing individual learning agility measures De Meuse, Dai and Hallenbeck (K.P. De Meuse et al., 2010) refer to a restriction of the Lominger Choices Architect™ Assessment noting that is a multi-rater approach, also known as a 360. They suggest that alternatives are needed, posing such alternatives a structured interviews or a self-assessment of learning agility. The latter alternative became a reality in 2012 with the viaEdge (Kenneth P De Meuse et al., 2011) individual learning agility assessment. For this research, however, *structured interviews and a self-assessment* based on the viaEdge items/constructs will

be used to assess individual changes in learning agility. This approach is chosen instead of the viaEdge instrument itself due to cost and time constraints.

The structured interviews will also address the top four learning agility concepts as shown on the Lominger Diagnostic Map (Michael M Lombardo & Eichinger, 2001). These are, in order of importance: dealing with ambiguity, problem solving, learning on the fly, and perspective. They further reiterate that successful leaders respond to complex and paradoxical situations with nimble behaviors such as agility, versatility, flexibility and adaptability. The combination of the CVF tool *and* the structured interviews provide the framework for assessment/measurement of change with regard to the research constructs.

The figure below is an example of the paradox integration thought process.

Figure 4-1 Competing Values Paradox Integration (Cameron & Quinn, 2011)



4.3 Research Setting

As noted, the research methodology for this project is action research. In addition to the five phase, cyclical process (Susman & Evered, 1978), the approach first requires the establishment of a client-system infrastructure or research environment.

The setting(s) for this research involved three organizations with one respective executive/informant from each for a total number of participants of three (3).

4.3.1 Client System Infrastructure and Interaction

The research was organized so that each organizational participant was engaged in each action research cycle. That is, after permission was secured and appropriate consent forms were signed, the participant was:

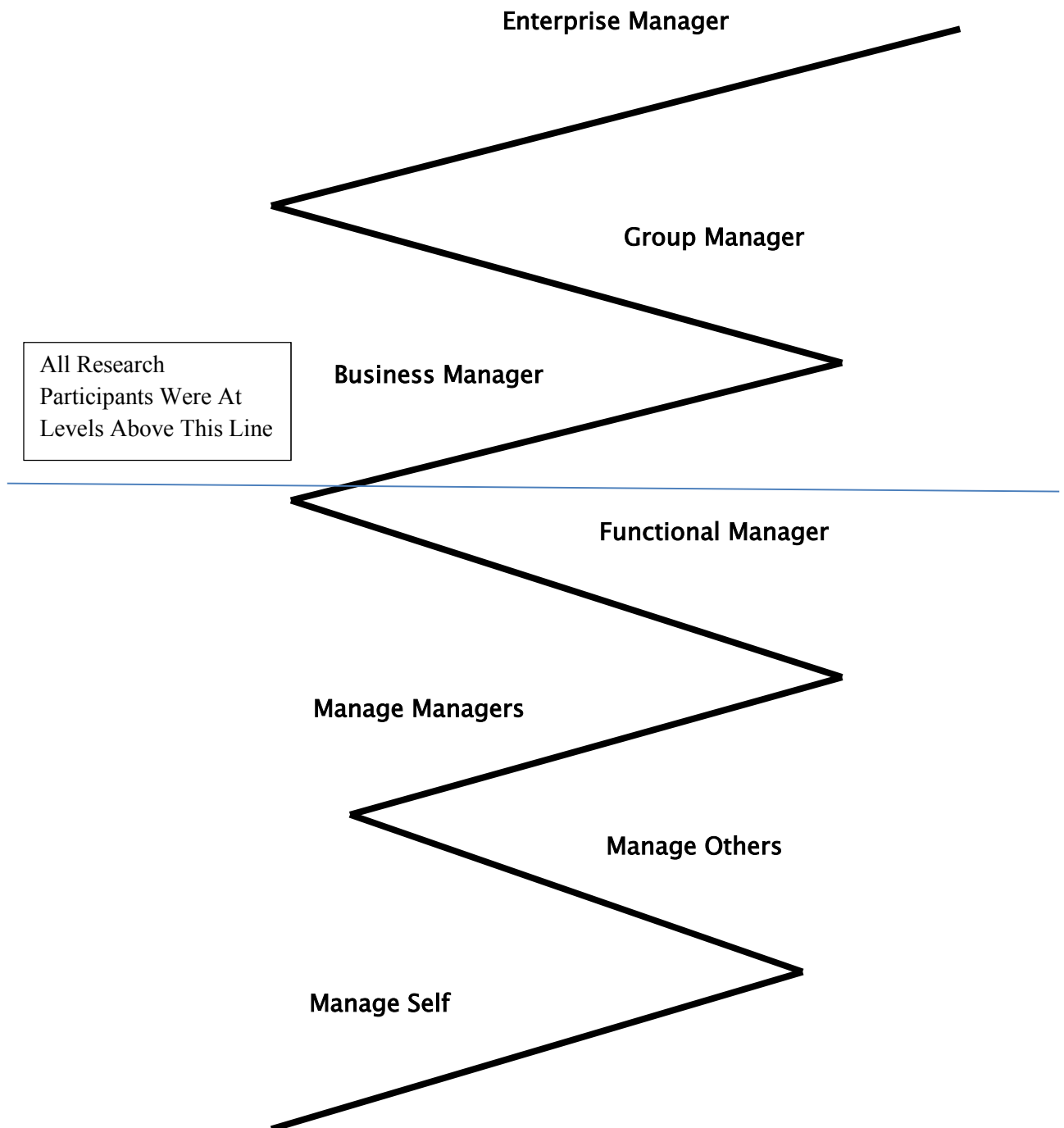
1. Given the Competing Values Framework assessment to determine their personal individual CV framework baseline
2. Interviewed using Participant Structured Interview 1 Based On Learning Agility and Leadership Pipeline Constructs to assess individual learning agility/executive development baseline. This was also useful in establishing a coaching direction per input from the client, following Action Research principles noted in Section 4.1([Argyris and Schön,1991, p. 86]) that *‘causal inferences about the behavior of human beings are more likely to be valid and enactable when the human beings in question participate in building and testing them’*.
3. Given an executive coaching session (1), the content/template of which is partially derived from Dr. Steve Olson’s work (Olson, 2004) and reflective judgment constructs. Both diagnostic and developmental behaviors surfaced from the executive coaching steps.
4. Given a second assessment using the Competing Values Framework assessment to observe change in the individual’s CV framework with a view toward paradox integration
5. Interviewed using Participant Structured Interview 2 Based On Learning Agility and Leadership Pipeline Constructs to continue observation of individual learning agility. Interview 2 also reflected insights from Cycle 1 with additional questions to explore possible theoretical extensions.

6. Given a second executive coaching session designed from learning's in the first intervention and Structured Interview 2.
7. Given a post-assessment using the Competing Values Framework assessment to observe additional change in the individual's CV framework.
8. Interviewed using Participant Structured Interview 3 Based on Learning Agility Constructs to self-assess individual learning agility change and participants' view of individual outcomes from the research.

In addition, the researcher maintained a diary with appropriate reflections around the interventions, and engaged in 'participant observation' in other forms, including observation from previous work with the leaders. As a researcher-participant during the research process, and the researcher was a subject in the research from the viewpoint of learning and personal development. NOTE: Each artifact above is provided in the appendix.

The research participants had each reached executive levels of leadership in accordance with the leadership pipeline in Kesler's article (Kesler, 2002) and represented one of three key segments of the U.S. workforce: Private Government Contractors, Academia and Corporate America. The participants' relative position on the leadership pipeline and additional participant information is provided in more detail below:

Figure 4-2 Leadership Pipeline (Charan et al., 2011)



Participant 1: Participant 1 is a program director with a major government/military contractor located in Washington, DC. He has transcended the leadership pipeline over a distinguished career in the military and now oversees several key areas for his company, one of which is compliance oversight for the global nuclear treaty. From his own words in the initial interview session,

“Currently, I am the director for Advanced Imagery, business area that encompasses three locations: just outside of Location 1 where we have about 230 people, a Location 2 office, where we have about a 120 people and here in Location 3 where we have about 15 people. The organization ranges primarily government contracting, a few commercial contracts but mostly government. The Location 1 group is involved mainly in research and development types of work, that’s their history with some of their founders-- it is all about image processing. So, the image value chain from actually taking an image, whereas we do not necessarily do sensors in any big way. We do use sensor data from other platforms and the algorithms and processing capabilities for exploitation of image or imagery data that allows more to be seen than is better than the naked eye.

Some of those programs involve a significant footprint of support for assets supporting some of the intelligence organizations of the U.S. government and then a good bit of support with the Defense Research Projects Agency (DRPA). Here, in Location 3, it’s primarily our persons on the maintenance of a nuclear 3D program for verification of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and that was my legacy role prior to the program manager role. The Dayton group does imagery processing primarily for one of the military intelligence agencies that’s responsible for supporting lower fighters primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The business volume is somewhere in the order of 70 million, actually, we’re going to do about almost 80 this year but the plan was 70 million and it’s -- we’re on the calendar year, so we are coming down to the wire. I have 14 direct reports who are the program managers for the 77 programs. So, several of them have a variety of programs, small programs that are in kind of portfolio programs that we manage and then the functional elements that support the subcontracts from finance security.”

Participant 2: Participant 2 is an academic leader at a major university, having moved through several levels of leadership since his initial role with the organization in 1996. Again, from our initial interview:

“ I teach at the University. The school opened in 1996 and I was a part of the team that opened the school though I was not teaching at the time. I have continued to enjoy professional development in the same context moving from role to role. And now, about 17 years later, I am Assistant Professor of Leadership. I’m also Executive Director of the Center which is a center that helps study and fund transition of our students.”

Participant 3: Participant 3 works for a well-known fast food chain and has also experience career transitions, both within corporate settings and by making career moves. He is currently responsible for bringing a culture of hospitality to the 1700 restaurants in the network. His initial interview revealed:

“So I graduated from Georgia Tech in 1997 with a Business Degree, went into the US Military to the Air force, and my goal was to be a Pilot, had visions and dreams of being a fighter pilot. Got into the training aspect of that about half way through the training, decided I didn’t want a long-term career in the military. I enjoyed the flying part but didn’t necessary want a career in the military. So I began a career in the air force in Quality Management..

So I was a Second Lieutenant in the air force and then I was a First Lieutenant and I got out before being promoted to a captain. Great work it was just great exposure as a first career. I had responsibility to lead three noncommissioned officers, Staff Sergeant, Tech Sergeant and a Master Sergeant. Each of them range anywhere from 10 years service to 20 years of service. They reported to me along with several civilians in the office, not civilians but government service employees that worked in the office. So our total officers are about 12 of us and did that for those three years. So I had now three years of quality management under my belt, which really is the internal air force career field for quality consulting.

And about this time, the early days of internet development and business being through the internet I joined Facility Pro which provided e-procurement services, sourcing of building maintenance products—this is essentially what they did by using internet technology and online catalogues. So anyway I did made a decision that this is a great opportunity So, I did that. That was 2001 but by the end of 2001, I had moved in from consulting into a role really of account management. So, I had started out in that whole go out, work, partner with the sales team to get the business and then consult to it. So, I did that in 2002 until probably the fall of 2002 and then I was promoted to a director in account management. And one of my roles was to oversee multiple accounts and ensure that the crossover between sales and consulting an account management was good.

I decided to look into the service sector and see if there’s an area that I could translate that sort of hard black and white rules and zero defects of quality and translate that into the people. The Quality Consultant at Ritz-Carlton in the 1990s basically gave me the story of Horst Schulze creating Ritz-Carlton and all these things they had done together at Ritz in the '90s and how Horst was creating Capella Hotel Group. And what they were looking for was a vice president of quality to come in and lead that work. So, basically I joined with them. So, we would focus on two main internal customers, leaders running hotels and the team members that work for them. And some of the basic service standards, some of the basic quality principles were met for the end-user which was the frontline team member. But a lot of the analysis and strategy and process improvement methodologies were meant for leaders to learn, grow and adopt. So, I was there for five years. Through friendship with someone at my current organization and who was the director of hospitality and service design, I have now ended up leading the hospitality and service excellence effort for our 1700 restaurants”

4.3.2 Action Planning and Theoretical Connection

The Action Research process followed cyclic approach and is based on the literature review and theoretical framework as follows:

1) Diagnosing – During the initial interview, the general learning agility competencies of the participant were assessed along with the participant’s view of development needs and coaching challenges. The CVF pre-assessment was also be used to determine a baseline. 2) Action planning – An executive coaching session followed and was designed to address a) the research theoretical constructs and b) information gained during the initial interviews and assessment process. While the initial theory underlying the actions to be taken in the first cycle was based on the learning agility constructs and their relationship to leadership pipeline progression, the table below provides a more comprehensive view of the action-to-theory connections for the research. The multiple theoretical lens are addressed throughout, with minor theoretical enhancements for subsequent cycles. Refer to Figure 3-2 for a visual representation of the theoretical connection to action planning.

Table 4-1 Connecting Action Planning To Theory

Planned Action	Theoretical Basis
Pre Interviews and Assessment	Theories from: Section 2.1, Learning Agility Literature and Executive Development Literature , Section 3, The Theoretical Framework
An Executive Coaching Session	Section 2.2 Executive Coaching and Section 4.2 The Competing Values Framework
Mid Interview and Assessment	Theories from: Section 2.1, Learning Agility Literature and Executive Development Literature; Section 3, The Theoretical Framework plus insight from the executive coaching session; Section 4.2, Competing Values Framework

(3) Action taking – The executive coaching session was delivered; a second assessment using the CVF assessment tool was also conducted, leading to an evaluation for Cycle 2 planning.

(4) Evaluating Outcomes– Outcomes of this action planning and action taking in Cycle 1 were evaluated and informed the development of cycle 2. More specifically, the following notes important reflections following Cycle 1:

The Cycle 1 practical and theoretical outcomes follow from a brief review of the facts and related evaluation/learning's.

Cycle 1 Interviews

The initial structured interviews revealed existing levels of learning agility for all three participants. Participant 1 had received a recent promotion, the latest in a series of upward pipeline movement throughout his career. Participant 2 likewise exhibited successful career progression, the most recent over the past five years with such additional responsibilities as assistant dean, grant direction and degree component development. He demonstrated a level of metacognition by expressing clarity around 'learning how he learns'. Participant 3's mobile and extensive career movement has taken him through various levels of the leadership pipeline, now overseeing the company's hospitality function for some 1700 restaurants. He has also demonstrated a strong 'learning from experience' ethos.

Cycle 1 Executive Coaching

The Cycle 1 executive coaching sessions were equally informative, and offered the added component of *action* around the respective coaching issues. Participant 1 wanted to get 'buy-in with understanding' from his team in order to move forward with a significant culture change. His action(s) included socializing the ideas as well as preparing a well-designed presentation, both of which involved his ability to manage change and deal with complexity. Participant 2 was facing a dilemma with regard to grant management which clearly revealed competing tensions (values) within himself and with the team. The need for paradox integration became obvious as we uncovered the elements of the dilemma, and his action requirement meant helping the team (and himself) work through the dual goals: spending the grant

money and creating a sustainable revenue stream to continue following the grant. Participant 3 elected to work on building his hospitality team. Among other things he was aware that building a functional team would ultimately result in a shift for him with regard to how he spends time—he was aware that a he would be ‘less in the weeds’ and more strategic when this task was complete. Immediate actions for him included further development of existing team members as well as a hiring/recruiting task.

Cycle 1 CVF

The Cycle 1 CVF assessments provided a baseline for future cycles, but generally indicated a strong collaboration (yellow) focus for all three. In addition, Participant 1 reflected almost equal results between his collaboration and control quadrants, while Participant 2 showed moderate results with the compete and create quadrants. Participant ‘s baseline CVF was complemented primarily with creativity.

Cycle 1 Researcher Diary (NOTE: Complete Diary Entries From Researcher Are Contained in Appendix)

The researcher’s diary reflections are also relevant. Here are some direct quotes from my diary:

‘For each participant, I found myself very intrigued with his or her job, roles, and current challenges. From a global issue significant to national security to managing an academic grant to impacting a very successful, and recently challenged, fast food organization through the concept of ‘hospitality’. Was also aware that I was paying special attention to my questions and interactions in an effort to mitigate bias, by inadvertently revealing a direction that might lead the participant to accommodate expected research outcomes—give answers he thought would be ‘right’ or helpful, etc. In other words, my own thought process was on 2-3 tracks. One, protecting the integrity of the research; two, following the research plan—structured interview questions and coaching, and three, being ‘in the moment’ so as to offer an authentic process—i.e. to deal with their real issues from the industry accepted research and coaching models. I was also intentional about being an engaged participant, open to learning myself.

I was aware of the internal attention I was giving to these tracks, and at times wanted to move into my more typical role of coaching without the other elements in the background.’

Cycle 1 Meaning and Implications

Meaning from the Cycle 1 action-taking: the structured interview, executive coaching and CVF baseline surfaced through further reflection and the implications with regard to Cycle 2 planning. For starters, it was clear that all of the participants exhibited learning agility traits, partly by virtue of their successful careers, but also through their interview responses and executive coaching actions. (NOTE: Detailed responses from each participant are contained in Section 6, Results). Among the important ones were self-awareness, dealing with change, ambiguity and complexity, paradox integration, and reflection. The major ‘aha’ to the researcher was that, while the participants exhibited learning agile characteristics, they themselves were not totally aware of the existence of these traits nor of the import with regard to each participant’s career success. Their self-awareness excluded an awareness that they were ‘learning agile’. Hence this had not been codified for their future use with intentionality.

A minor theory modification from Cycle 1 therefore resulted and impacted action-planning for Cycle 2. Specifically the theory modification addressed ‘learning agile awareness’, and included the proposition that ‘awareness of skills/strengths (in this case learning agility skills/strengths) can accelerate development of learning agile traits. In other words, when one is ‘aware’ of a certain strength, growth with regard to that strength increases at an increasing rate’. While it was not feasible to build a robust research framework for this theoretical enhancement, Structured Interview 2 was modified in order to explore this theory.

The practical outcomes from Cycle 1 were related in that elements of this theoretical notion appear in the contribution to practice, viz., within the executive coaching piece of the practical methodology in the form of exercises to promote learning agile awareness.

(5) Specifying learning. - This evaluation informed the design and development of the next cycle with respect to: a) Theory Adjustment for Cycle 2 and b) Practice/Cycle Adjustment for Cycle 2.

Cycle 2 Details: As noted, the theoretical enhancement for Cycle 2 involved the construct of ‘learning agile awareness’. In order to explore the research question through this additional theoretical lens, the action steps themselves did not change: A structured interview, an executive coaching session and the CVF assessment. What did change were some of the questions in Structured Interview 2 and the executive coaching session. For example, the question ‘ How aware were you before we started this research of your learning agility skills? ‘ was added. This and other questions were added, designed to explore the theory enhancement around the participant’s awareness of his learning agility skills and how they contributed to current success. More significantly, there was exploration around the notion that awareness of learning agility would possibly accelerate one’s development with regard to learning agility. Evaluating the outcomes of Cycle 2, as per the cyclic nature of Action Research, the following is relevant:

Cycle 2 Structured Interviews

The second structured interview with Participant 1 supported the participant’s on-going need for adaptability and flexibility in order to achieve his desired culture change for the organization. When asked about awareness of his own strengths and the impact of that awareness on his growth, he acknowledged that awareness does impact development when he said ‘absolutely, because when you get to the awareness, the most satisfying moment is *I never thought of it that way*, or the ‘aha’.’

Structured Interview 2 with Participant 2 also addressed the question of learning agile awareness, among the other research questions. His response, ‘I have been aware but not always courageous when I hit the impasse, but I’m aware of when I’m dealing with creative tensions’. And, as for this awareness impacting his growth and development, he says ‘I think it can help by strategies for thinking through the uncomfortable tensions with different lenses’

Participant 3’s Cycle 2 structured interview generated prolific dialog around awareness in general and learning agile awareness specifically. When asked about the latter, the participant noted ‘I don’t know what

I would call it if you were to ask me five years ago and you described all these traits—but I think I'm very self-aware'. The self-awareness he described, though loosely related to learning agile awareness, has served him well and in that context, positively impacted his growth, particularly with regard to managing complexity. The importance of this interview to the research is the researcher's insight that future research around the awareness constructs must be clearly defined and distinctive from the more general forms of self-awareness.

Cycle 2 Executive Coaching

Executive coaching session 2 with Participant 1 offered an opportunity to deal with an entirely different coaching issue, this time around the upcoming 'rifs'—reduction in force. At this point, a key insight for this participant involved his view of the future in terms of time span. Such a revelation connected to the higher level leadership pipeline concepts regarding the future. The importance of this to the research was its implication around the participant's own growth. Action items for Participant 1 from this session focused on developing an explicit strategy for dealing with the people who were going to lose their jobs.

Following the theme which emerged with Participant 2 in his 2nd structured interview, the coaching focus was on his executive leadership role when confronted with his internal competing values, and the underlying assumptions. Internal competing values such as 'Yeah, I want them to like me and I want them to produce'. Regarding the study, this moment produced a second major insight for the researcher: the insight that personal/individual competing values could be more significant than organizational competing values when dealing with executive development.

Cycle 2 executive coaching for Participant 3 continued on his previous challenge of building his team, this time with a more specific focus on managing the team than creating the team. This was a clear indication

that Participant 3 is looking ahead to a time when he can function at the higher level his role demands while being confident that the team is not only performing to standards but keeping him adequately *informed*. His internal tension, competing values in a way, involves the need to ‘let them go’ and ‘be on top of the situation’—not micromanaging but teaching the team to upward manage.

Cycle 2 CVF

With regard to changes in the CVF assessments, Participant 1 showed marked increase in the create(green) quadrant and marked decrease in the control(red) quadrant, consistent with his desire for more creativity with to manage the culture change. Participant 2 grew with respect to the competing values of create and control, also consistent with his recognition of the need for more control as an executive leader. Participant 3’s changes as shown in the Cycle 2 CVF also reflected development in the capacity to manage competing values (paradox integration), showing more compete (blue) against the competing collaborate value.

Cycle 2 Researcher’s Diary

Excerpts from the researcher’s diary confirm learning’s from Cycle 2 and provide additional foundation for any theoretical or practical changes for the wrap-up Cycle 3 (NOTE: Cycle 3 was designed differently from the outset to exclude an executive coaching session. The reason for this departure was the lack of a 4th CVF assessment and structured interview to assess further change). That said, here are specific researcher thoughts as occurred during the sessions.

I was myself as a participant in the research experiencing such things as dealing with ambiguity, paradox integration, managing complexity, metacognition, reflective judgment and others. I was therefore experiencing executive development, namely, learning agility as the coach and as I was coaching and realized I can operate at a higher level as a coach. The issue for the prior session was not in his front burner and somehow we ended up coaching around some of his personal competing values. It was not until we reached the end of the session that I reflected and can say that I realized the value of where we had gone with respect to the research itself.

Again, as a participant engaged scholar, I had my own aha. Perhaps even a foundation for the theory practical contribution section. By this, I mean, that the CVP as used by the DeGraff and all in the context of organizational value and innovation. Although adopted by many for other

uses in context, it could also perhaps be viewed as a meta-construct. One which would allow for the dynamic creation of various competing value constructs and a related assessment on the fly.

This observation confirms my thinking of a more general competing values assessment methodology wherein one might identify their own competing values and then develop strategies or skills to integrate the opposites.

Cycle 2 Meaning and Implications

Reflections from the Cycle 2 action-taking: structured interview 2, executive coaching and CVF 2nd assessments suggested additional theory adjustment and practice opportunities. Significant from this cycle was the confirmation that learning agile awareness could and did impact executive development around the construct. Another new theoretical adjustment involved the researcher's analysis that individual/personal competing values were equally, if not more important than corporate competing values. This led to adjustments to the questions in Structured Interview 3 to further explore the theory as well as allow for this in the practical contribution: a defined methodology for executive development based on this research. The practice specifics are outlined in the contribution section, and the new questions are shown in the appendix, Structured Interview 3. Cycle 3 Reflections and final conclusions are provided in Sections 6 and 7, Results and Insights/Conclusions respectively.

5 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

As noted, the data collection approach was through two action research cycles plus a final interview and CVF assessment. Data from these were recorded in written and verbal form, entered into NVIVO software, coded and reviewed. The assessment data was further reviewed through visuals and reports provided by the Competing Values Framework assessment.

Key research themes were coded in the interview transcripts, the executive coaching transcripts and the researcher's diary, all of which were imported to NVIVO. Those themes that were coded relate specifically to the theoretical constructs, the literature, the research domain/question and included:

1. Dealing With Complexity
2. Complex Learning and Thinking
3. Prediction and Future
4. Change Agility – curious, innovative, change anticipation
5. Competing Values (per CVF)
6. Leadership Pipeline/Transitions
7. Reflection/reflective judgment/process of knowing
8. Metacognition
9. Paradox Integration
10. Self-Discovery/insight/aha's
11. Executive Development
12. Management of Uncertainty
13. Resilience
14. Higher level mental processes
15. Problem solving, learning on the fly, perspective
16. Learning Agility
17. Adaptability/flexibility
18. Receptivity to feedback
19. Self-Awareness
20. Learning from experience/application to new experiences
21. Ambiguity
22. View of future-Time Span
23. How time is spent-Time Spent
24. Individual Competing Values
25. Awareness of Learning Agility

Subsequent to the coding process, data analysis began. According to Miles and Huberman ((Miles & Huberman, 1994) coding is helpful for the interpretation phase and can begin with an initial list as above. However, as the process continues the initial list may be enhanced to facilitate sense making.

The table below is included to simplify and classify the key coding categories:

Table 5-1 Summary of Coding Themes

Core Theme/ Construct	Sub-Themes	Relevance To Research and Theoretical Constructs
Learning Agility	Mental Agility Adaptability Feedback Ambiguity Use of Experience Complexity Self-Awareness	The learning agility theme is central to the research due to its prominence as a key indicator for executive success. The sub-themes are referenced in the literature, and defined in the context of learning agility. Mental agility is one of the four sub-dimensions of learning agility.
	Change Agility Flexibility Perspective Resilience Management of Uncertainty	The capacity to confront and manage change is a key sub-dimension of learning agility; hence, its relevance.
Leadership Pipeline (Transitions and Executive Development)	View of Time (Look To Future)	While there are other sub-dimensions of the leadership pipeline, the executive's view of the future expands the further 'up' the pipeline the executive moves. The research's emphasis on executive development for upward movement on the pipeline makes this important.
	Use of Time	Likewise, an executive's use of time changes as she/he moves up the pipeline. Instead of tactical, detail issues, the senior executive levels focus on strategy, the big picture and people development. They 'do' less and think more.
Complex Learning	Metacognition	Development and growth are key to the research and coupled with the learning agility sub-dimension of mental agility, 'a person's procedural knowledge for regulating one's problem solving and learning activities' (A. L. Brown & DeLoache, 1978) makes metacognition relevant to the study.
	Reflective Judgment Problem Solving	Reflective judgment addresses many of the learning agility dimensions through its theories around knowing; viz., an individual's 'good judgment in the face

Core Theme/ Construct	Sub-Themes	Relevance To Research and Theoretical Constructs
		of uncertainty’.
Competing Values	Paradox Integration (both-and thinking)	The Competing Values Framework and related assessment was used to observe the executive’s capacity to integrate paradox, a construct which subsumes mental agility and complex learning.
	Individual Competing Values	The research surfaced a number of individual competing values within the participants. As this became apparent, the sub theme was added to provide a foundation for further research.
Executive Coaching	Self-Discovery	For purposes of this research, the meaning is limited to those ideas/concepts/thoughts that one discovers for him/herself through a facilitated process of executive coaching. Because the research explores the executive coaching model as a development model for executives, this is an important element.
	Reflection	Reflection is also embedded in executive coaching and because reflective learning occurs through daily actions and experiences, the action bias of executive coaching provides the context for reflection.

Following completion of the data collection, the audio recordings, transcripts and researcher’s diary were reviews multiple times. This analysis was completed according to data analysis procedures by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for qualitative data analysis. Despite the more abstract nature of qualitative research (by comparison to quantitative methods), rigorous approaches to data analysis have been developed which provide solid evidentiary support to conclusions and insights. There are ways to organize, process, analyze and evaluate information from qualitative data acquired through well-designed research. Fundamentally, the key objective of the data analysis is to address the research question. With that in mind, the data analysis processes in this research aligns with the three distinct components defined

by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994): data reduction, followed by data display, and finally conclusion drawing and verification.

Data Reduction: During this phase, data acquired during the research was extracted and filtered through the theoretical lens, the conceptual framework, and the general research themes. As such, Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994) more specifically describe data reduction as *‘the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions’*. The description of this phase says it all—*reduction*. As in other phases, the theoretical framework for the research provides the backdrop so that the ‘data reduction’ occurs within some context rather than autonomously. The coding process provided selected data relevant to the research question and a foundation for the remaining data display, results and discussion sections. Significant portions of the transcripts were marked and reviewed for inclusion in the subsequent analysis and presentation.

Data Display: Classification and organization characterize this phase, where data can be displayed through a variety of formats. These presentations are designed to provide the researcher with opportunity to view the data in such a way as to facilitate systematic thinking, pattern observations and sense making. The importance of the data display phase is to allow the researcher to perceive higher order insights that might not have surfaced in the more detached data reduction phase. Tables and matrices which reveal patterns and inform conclusions will be key, but other forms such as charts and models are not excluded. For this research, the data display is primarily in the form of tables where each participant’s relevant quotes are noted with respect to a theme or code. That detail data later summarize into composite charts and tables.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification: At this point, the researcher begins to draw connections between the data and the research question. Implication is the key construct, where sense making and meaning

come alive in order to substantiate the insights and support the contributions. Verification occurs as the data is reviewed through iterations, reflection and other insight producing mechanisms. Efforts to maximize objectivity notwithstanding, the task at hand are to develop sound argument(s) for conclusions. It is also important during this phase to assess inconsistent or contradictory data. Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1984) refer to these as ‘surprises’ and confirm the necessity of ‘checking the meaning of outliers’ and ‘using extreme cases’. A final thought regarding the data analysis approach: it is iterative. While the three-phase outline provided by Miles and Huberman may appear to be linear, it is not.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Individual Participant Data

The Data: The data consists of output from the Competing Values Assessments, coding/themes from the participant transcripts plus the researcher's diary, including specific quotes. It is organized below, first by participant with some detail, followed by summaries via tables and charts.

Participant 1: Participant 1 revealed strong themes around learning agility/learning from experience, managing complexity, managing uncertainty, change, resilience, perspective, self-awareness, metacognition, future orientation, adaptability/flexibility, reflection, awareness of learning agility, self-discovery. The table below provides specific quotes from the interviews and coaching sessions to support these findings.

Table 6-1 Participant 1 Coded Transcript Quotes

Theme/Construct	Quote(s)	Source of Quote
Learning Agility/Learning From Experience	1. Actually, I've been told this. I'm very creative in my use of process or getting out of process in order to tailor it to achieve the outcome because I have discovered it with the company and the company is a very process orient company. 2.And from and staying ahead of, to Do that, but getting in this and always , it oriented me to a piece that was different from the past of observing others and what their issues were and bringing the application of that observation internalizing and bringing back to me, bringing back to to adjust, to make shifts in what I was doing to do that and I started to seeing results from it.	Cycle 2, Structured Interview 1
Managing Complexity	The situation and this is the main challenge with this role. One is geography because we have three	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1

	locations. They are just located from their customer base. Most of the customer base is here in Washington, in the Washington area. So, access to the customer is relatively difficult-- it's not that it's limited as you got to make an effort to go to the customer or the customers go to you. So overtime in the geography – the problem of geography presents is it allows you to somewhat stove pipe your thinking.	
Managing Uncertainty	I'm not saying don't do anything because you were afraid it will fail, but you have to plan for the consequences. You have to plan the outcomes and you have to be able to foresee a failure in a particular technology or a failure in performance before the failure occurs, so that you can take mitigating steps to either prevent it or in the case of a contract we're on or a particular project--to turn it off before the government feels or the customers feels they have wasted money and you have taken their money from them.	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Change	Once you discovered your position, it doesn't work or it has limitations and you need to go on a different direction.	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Resilience	I have learned and it's been experiential that -- and this goes back to very early in my career, but every setback is a positive experience.	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Perspective	and that gave me some perspective on what failure does and how to learn from failure in order to go to the next step because the pilot training year is probably -- it's designed to be the most intensive stress inducing year that you will have in your career, because it's designed to keep you under the gun	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1

Self-Awareness	<p>1. Now, for people who are kind of self-directing, and I put myself in that category, but it's not a problem for me.</p> <p>2. That's what I have in my head right now. If somebody asks me, "What's your comfort level with that?" I said, "It depends on what time that they asked me." The reason I say what time of the day is, I wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning and scared the death of this and say, "I don't know whether I can do this. I don't know how it's going to be done."</p> <p>3. I don't know if it is unique to me but the piece of it that has made me successful is in every case. I own that responsibility from the time I make that decision and I know I own the responsibilities.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching</p> <p>Cycle 2, Structured Interview</p>
Metacognition	<p>It's very, very hard to go after understanding. We understand it, and then figure out how I am going to tell the story and then go for it and be absolutely consistent</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching</p>
Future Orientation	<p>1. So, if we look over the next five years, what we're doing now, we have what we would like to do and what we think the customers got some interest in some of that. We might have still an investment here, or we have to have an input here, so it may be an investment that we make or it's an investment we get a customer to make.</p> <p>2. We need to create the future for a user</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching</p> <p>Cycle 2, Structured Interview</p>
Adaptability/Flexibility	<p>1. So, I'm trying to back away a little bit from my insistence on process. Help them understand where process can help us in getting to the point where we can pursue some of the</p>	<p>Cycle 2, Structured Interview</p>

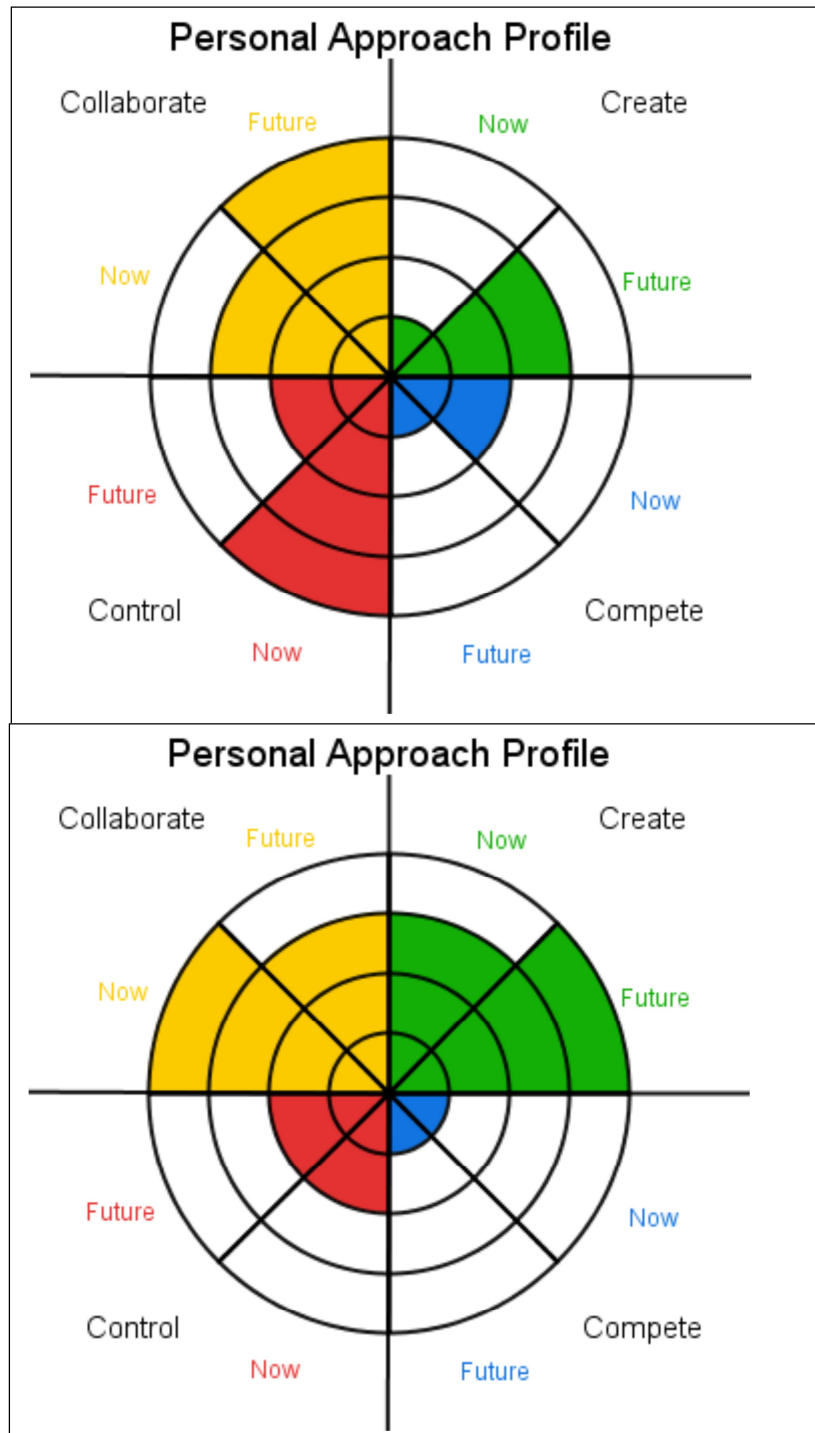
	<p>creative ideas that they have, but I open myself up to the creativity as well</p> <p>2. So you've got to balance some of that, but you may want it to go way to one side for a given time or a given situation. You don't want it to go all the way, because now you lose flexibility.</p>	
Reflection	I spent a lot of time over the holidays thinking about that because that would be it. If you present that and leave it, you drop that out there and leave it alone and you insult two-thirds of the room because they see themselves as very innovative. The problem is they don't understand innovation.	Cycle 2, Structured Interview
Complex Learning/ Thinking	And part of that as I have spent a lot of time buried in that and thinking about that and now in presenting it because I started out with all hands. I have had some meetings with the seniors, the senior scientists, both in an individual level and as a collective level. In this week, I started what I'm calling Strategic Innovation Groups and they're specifically for the middle of scientists and engineers that don't typically have leaderships for it, to have a leadership but you're listening to them.	Cycle 2, Structured Interview
Executive Development (Evidence of Participant's Executive Development at his/her level)	Everything that you want to do has to be connected with the business guys because the business flow and the decisions on what we can pursue come down through the business side, through the business area director, through the program managers	Cycle 2, Structured Interview
Awareness of Learning Agility and how/if it accelerates executive development	Oh, absolutely, absolutely because when you get to the awareness, I think I've told you before with regard to just my coaching before we started any of this, the most satisfying moment in any coaching engagement is I never thought of it that way.	Cycle 2, Structured Interview

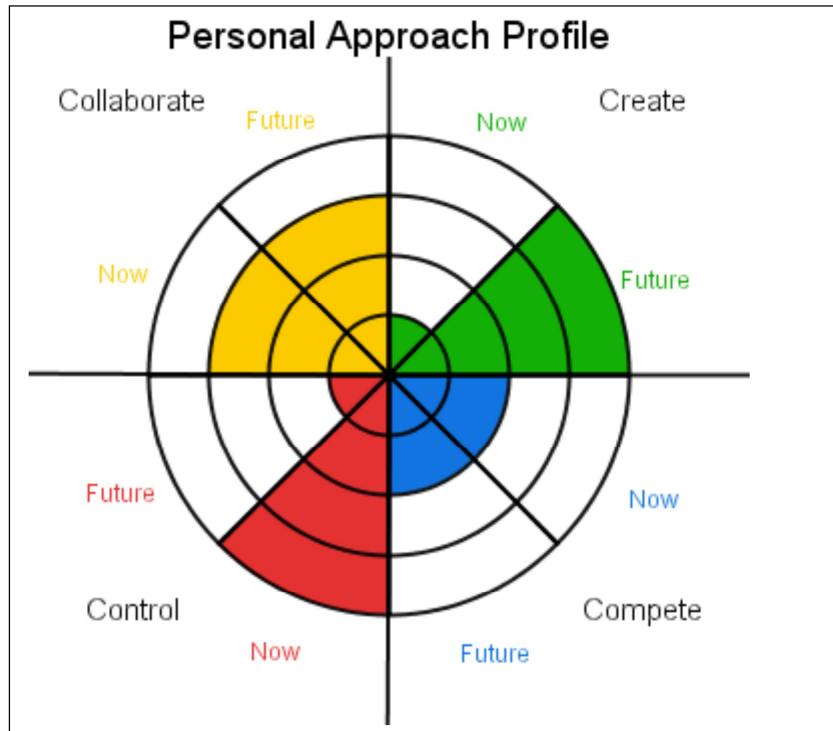
Self-Discovery/aha's	<p>1. You do get into a spin and you take Your eye off the ball.</p> <p>2. We're in a position to not rif (reduction in force) them, give them The opportunity to make it to a point where they make their own decision as opposed to the company making a decision for them</p>	Cycle 2, Executive Coaching

In addition, Participant 1's Competing Values Assessments reveal changes in his personal approach.

Results from his pre, mid, and post assessments are shown here, respectively:

Figure 6-1 Participant 1 Pre, Mid and Post CVF Assessments





Participant 2: Participant 2 revealed strong themes around learning agility/learning from experience, managing complexity, managing uncertainty, change, self-awareness, metacognition, future orientation, reflection, executive development, self-discovery, problem solving, individual competing values, paradox integration and how time is spent.

The table below provides specific quotes from the interviews and coaching sessions to support these findings.

Table 6-2 Participant 2 Coded Transcript Quotes

Theme/Construct	Quote(s)	Source of Quote
Learning Agility/Learning From Experience	And so I do want to be creative, but I'll be creative in a different direction.	Cycle 1, Executive Coaching
Managing Complexity	<p>1. The one that pops to mind first is an incredibly stressful transition, the year I moved to the classroom. We also had a grant that I'm the Executive Director of funded. So, we got a million-dollar grant. Prior to that grant, we have a \$2 million grant funded project that I was director of that grant project. But I was asked to move into the classroom, the last year of that grant project. And it was also the year I was in the writing phase of my doctoral work. So, the one that leaps to my mind is, while doing a full time job and writing my doctoral work, I was asked to begin in the classroom and I had no lectures ready to go.</p> <p>2. Again, part of what makes this all the more difficult is the nature of Grant funding, which is we've got a lot of money, where everybody else in the system is already dealing with issues of lean budget. This is the nature of our economy and higher education. But when you've got a grant, you can't spend it for anything else. And we got all kind of money; we're the only part of the system that's just this fat. So it invites this kind of dreaming.</p> <p>3. This is what strikes me. A part of me says nice and liked is congruent with results and that if I create the culture to use the language of emotional intelligence, if I create a culture of resonance where people like to come to work because it is a</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1 Cycle 1, Executive Coaching Cycle 2, Executive Coaching</p>

	pleasant place to be, that is going to generate better results.	
Managing Uncertainty	I asked a lot of questions again and I didn't go to books of pedagogy but asked a lot of questions of colleagues, of students	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Change	But how to work with people who don't have an internal sense of excellence is going to be a challenge for me, I think. Something new.	Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2
Self-Awareness	<p>1. Not knowing is anxious for me.</p> <p>2. And it feels like I'm the only at the table throwing water on the energy. Because I'm trying to be cautious about things that we start that we can't continue two years from now.</p> <p>3. What's been happening most recently was avoidance, because it is two years and not one year, you know. And yes, somebody can come with a bunch of money and you know. So, I have been avoiding any direct conversations about this.</p> <p>4. I think what could be most helpful, our skills for figuring out how to talk myself through the less attractive option for me. That is when I hit a place where two low values collide and I go to my default positions. I think I can be helped by strategies for thinking through the uncomfortable positions with different lenses. Like when you refrained it last time and said, "Let's talk about the values to the organization." I think I need strategies for giving a better voice to what feels to me the weaker of the two values.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1</p> <p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching 1</p> <p>Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2</p>
Metacognition/Learning About Learning	I was on the unit for pediatric cardiology and I didn't understand which procedures were life threatening and which ones were more common and their pastoral implications for that. My supervisor gave me a book of cardiology and told me to learn what I needed to learn. I was so	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1

	<p>overwhelmed by it that I instead asked a nurse to go to lunch with me and teach me what I needed to learn. When I returned the book to him, he was shocked that I returned it that early. He said, "You didn't read this." I said, "Well, quiz me." And he quizzed me and I got the answers right, and he pushed me to say, "How did you learn this stuff?" And I told him and he said, "That's an important thing for you to know. That you're primary learning is relational.</p>	
Future Orientation	<p>1. There are two answers of that (how are you viewing timeframe to get tighter on fiscal?). It's probably a four and eight months from now to be a six. And four months later would be an eight, (due to getting closer to end of grant)</p> <p>2. I would say right now, I'm thinking in annual blocks. There are some places where I need to thinking of three-year block because the grant I'm responsible for is a three-year exploration</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2</p>
Reflection	<p>It [coaching] did help me order my chaos, and it helped me stay disciplined to the least appealing parts of what was thrown at me. Writing was the hardest and least appealing of the tasks on my plate, and the single biggest advantage was that it kept me focused and disciplined to get the writing done.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview</p>
Executive Development	<p>1. So I haven't been the voice of fiscal caution over the life of the grant. I'm going to my default setting which is, "Let's dream as big as we can dream and chase it." And so I have more recently moved to a cautious setting.</p> <p>2. Yeah, I'm thinking about there is another possible job in my future that would include managing more people and more layers of people than I ever have before. I have only had to manage direct reports or one of the direct reports, so far. And I could be</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching 1 Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2 Cycle 2, Executive Coaching</p>

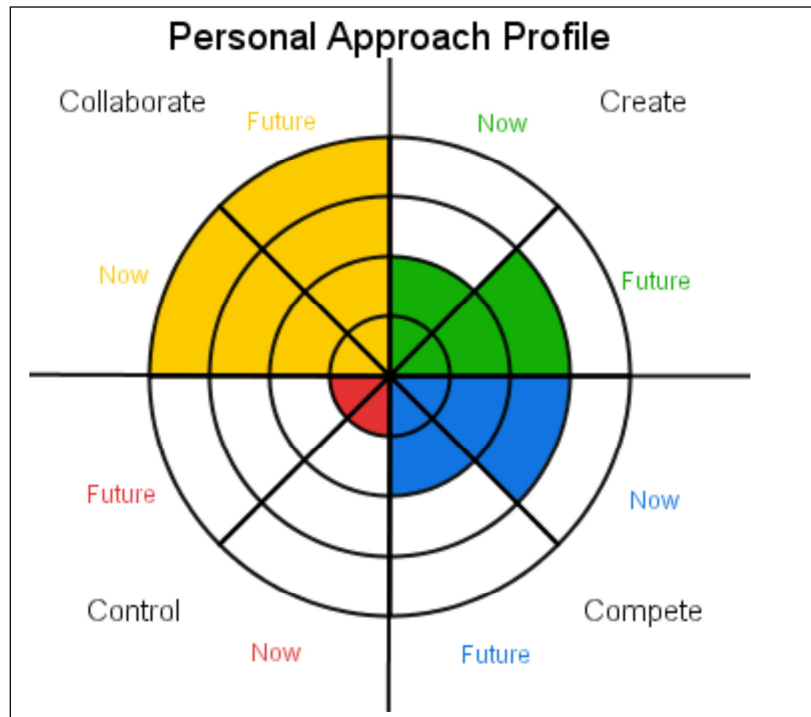
	<p>considered for a job that would have more layers of management than I've ever had to tackle before.</p> <p>3.I am also emerging into places of leadership where increasingly, I am responsible for system outcomes.</p>	
Self-Discovery/aha's	<p>1.Ihave known before that that I lead with feelings and relationships in leadership and count that as strength, but I also left here more aware of my liabilities related to always leading with feeling stuff. I'm more impressed with how hard it's going to be for me to make hard decisions when it hurts relationships.</p> <p>2.It was an actual issue, but this has A different kind of a permanent spin To think about how I am going to Think strategically, generally about how I talk myself through the competing values.</p> <p>3.The other part of what hit me about the results, you're writing the results on the board is my impact on the things that I need, I most need to do is being diminished by the fact that I say "yes "to things that are primary in my mission.</p> <p>4.It's really important to me, and part of the aha, it just happened for me internally. It was part of my energy about the potential new job has been the myth that I can live into that mission by giving away all this other stuff.</p>	<p>Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2</p> <p>Cycle 2, Executive Coaching</p>
Problem Solving	<p>Well, here's another piece that fits in alignment. I didn't have time to write all these lectures, and so for the first two years of teaching, I leaned heavily on friendships. I took that list of lecture topics that I needed to cover and I got on the phone and called buddies who do that part of the work well and asked them to come as a guest to my class and tell us what we need to know about.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview</p>

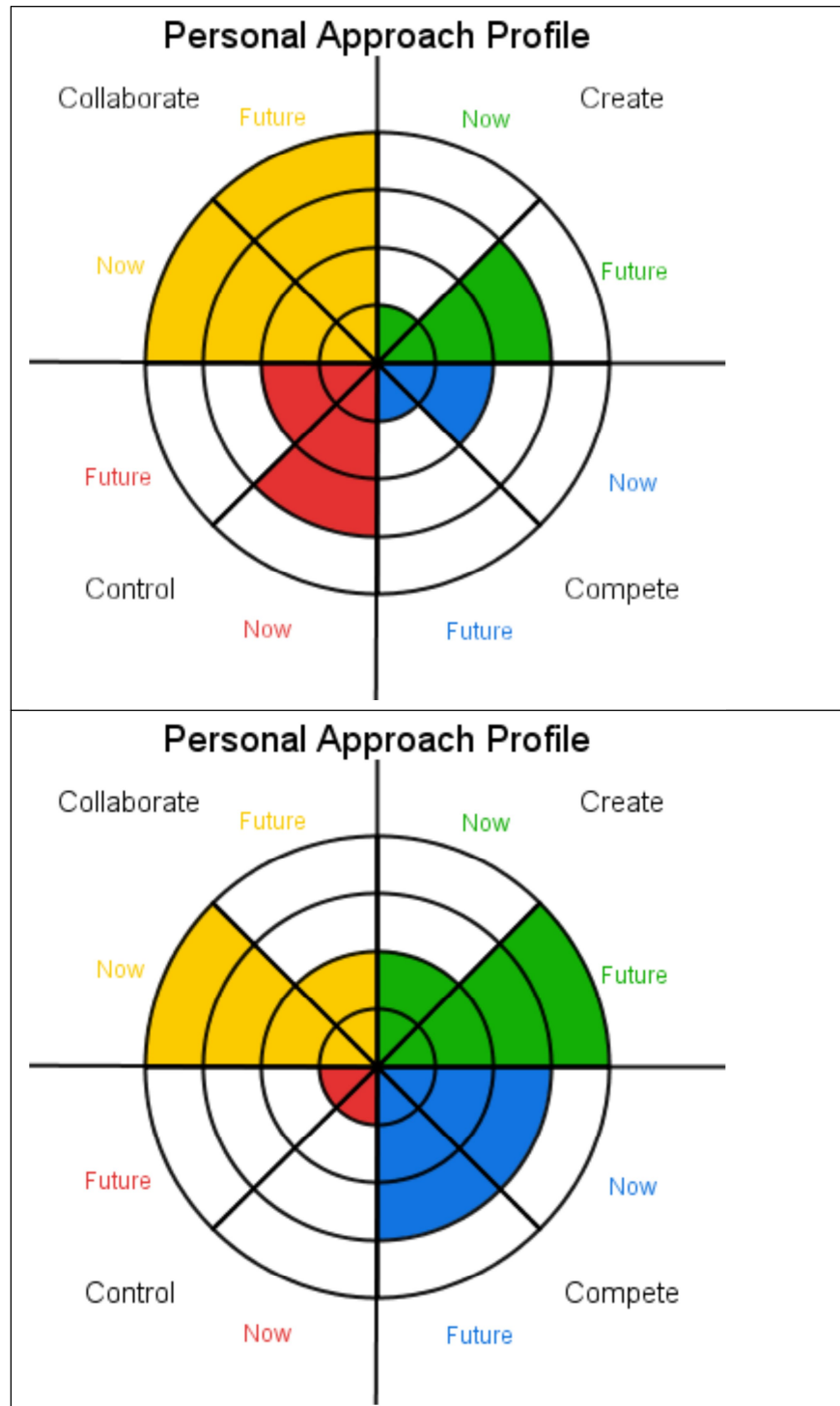
Individual Competing Values	<p>1. Because I am creative, when we Get on these brainstorming creativity sessions, I'm energized So I can usually be counted on in little think tanks to be energized and contributing to slinging ideas all over the place. And thinking, in dreaming big, in making somebody else push back against my big dreams and that kind of stuff, so that's a part of the role I play in the system. And so now, I am at a really peculiar role, because I'm not contributing big ideas if I don't feel like they will sustain income. And when the big ideas are contributed, I'm the one offering caution.</p> <p>2. I have been aware, not always courageous when I hit the impasse but I'm aware of when I'm dealing with creative tensions. When two of my values are clashing, I can see it vividly. I just don't always proceed courageously through it.</p> <p>3. Yeah, I want them to like me and I want them to produce</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching 1 Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2</p>
Paradox Integration	<p>1. But my hope would be another way To think creatively. (vs. dream spending)</p> <p>2. but I think I'm going to need to think of ways to introduce that kind of thinking into the room, while still being sensitive to the relational cost.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching 1 Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2</p>
How Time Spent	<p>1. I would really like to wipe the board clean and think, "What is the best? How do I say yes more strategically?" How do I think about my primary contributions and giving my energy/time to the things I do best and delegating and inspiring the things I don't do well?" I'm ready to have those</p>	<p>Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2 Cycle 2, Executive Coaching</p>

	<p>internal conversations.</p> <p>2.I don't have time to do that and I Just can't even imagine the world Where I'll tell somebody, "I don't have Time to do that. That's your value, Not mine." So, well, I have this Sincere hope that I learned new strategies for saying "No." I continued to get asking things that I just can't see myself saying no.</p>	
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In addition, Participant 2's Competing Values Assessments reveal changes in his personal approach. Results from his pre, mid, and post assessments are shown here, respectively:

Figure 6-2 Participant 2 Pre, Mid and Post CVF Assessments





Participant 3: Participant 3 revealed strong themes around learning agility/learning from experience, managing complexity, managing uncertainty, change, self-awareness, metacognition, future orientation, adaptability/flexibility, reflection, complex learning/thinking, executive development, self-discovery, receptivity to feedback, problem solving, paradox integration, how time is spent.

The table below provides specific quotes from the interviews and coaching sessions to support these findings.

Table 6-3 Participant 3 Coded Transcript Quotes

Theme/Construct	Quote(s)	Source of Quote
Learning Agility/Learning From Experience	<p>1. So I had now three years of quality management under my belt, which really is the internal air force career field for quality consulting. So if the air force has internal consultant it's man power and quality at least that was it at the time. So it was an easily transferable skill to get out to the consulting world.</p> <p>2. And I really didn't even have the skill set that Rich had in supply chain because I had basically taken quality management and bounce from air force to real estate, to supply chain and taking that same skill set and transferred it.</p> <p>3. So, then I kind of moved on to making sure that what we had developed in Auburn hotel was implemented in all of our hotels. It was taught to all of the leaders in our hotels. And there were some leadership components of it which was when I say we had created our own methodology, what I really focus on was not teaching quality principles for the sake of quality principles, but the same that you cannot say that you are a quality manager. And at the same time couple that with leadership excellence that the two had to be hand in hand.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1 Cycle 1, Executive Coaching</p>

	<p>4.The biggest difference that I'm seeing here. Let me give you the thing I didn't have to worry about anymore here, I say worry about, the thing that didn't really require my time and effort and the things that did. The things that didn't require time and effort which was different than all the other career changes that I had, I say company changes but they were in the new industries each time, the thing I didn't have to worry about here was that I was taking the skill sets I had at Capella and directly applying them here</p> <p>5.Well, and one of the things that Mark was really good about that I need to translate out to my team is he was good about helping me understand how he thinks about hospitality, not to make me a clone of him but to understand context and our context is very important.</p>	
Managing Complexity	<p>1.So, Goodyear, Michelin, Pirelli, Sumitomo, Cooper, Continental in Germany, Toyo, Yokahama, I mean all these companies owned a piece of us. And they would pay an annual subscription fees and the reason that they partnered with each other was they knew it was best to combine efforts in areas that don't violate any trust that are not related to direct materials but related to indirect materials and everybody saves. Translated from direct materials to indirect materials</p> <p>2.Yeah, the reality is there are 1,700 restaurants; they're all across the board. You've got all different types of restaurants, you've got all different types of leaders, some that are in their 20s, some that are in their 60s, it spans the gamut, there's revenue down below a million, there's revenue up to seven million. I mean it's all over the board. So how do we get all of these different</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1 Cycle 1, Executive Coaching Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2 Cycle 2, Executive Coaching</p>

	<p>variables out there? How to align all of that and get work with our team to influence or what I call or methodology is inspire, inform and equip, how do we inspire, inform and equip all these operators to deliver hospitality excellency everyday, all day not just at lunch, but everyday all day. One subset is how do we make the complex simple?</p> <p>3.To prioritize it and it was the most important work. And what's the most important work to me needs to be what the most important work to my bosses. So, I might now -- certainly if I need to weigh in, if I have different opinion. But if he comes down and says, "Hey, as the leader of Hospitality & Service Design, we need to make sure that as a company, we do this with excellence."</p> <p>4.I've found here, it's just extremely complex leading a team of people and making sure that every single day, I'm not just thinking about what I need to get done, but I'm thinking about what they're working on and how I can support them.</p> <p>5.So, having team members with different backgrounds, different education, I'm realizing that I need to create some standardization but still give them the wiggle room</p>	
Managing Uncertainty	<p>1.He was just a great teacher to me being a brand new officer coming in to the air force and taught me a lot.</p> <p>2.There was always uncertainty Because we were a start off and you never knew if the members were inside to pay the subscription fees the next year but we were doing great work for them.</p> <p>3 Seeking counsel from others." I've always been a big believer in finding someone as a mentor or leader, and it</p>	<p>Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2 Cycle 2, Executive Coaching</p>

	<p>can't just be anybody just because they're good at what they do</p> <p>4. Do we have our arms around it? Some of it is me getting others to a point where they are better about managing up to me, come into me and saying, "Hey Participant 3, I have an update for you. Here's what's going on."</p>	
Change	<p>It was the first in my career where I truly steeped myself into the environment of my end-user customer. And steep myself into the environment of my practitioner, which is our operators and learn their world first.</p>	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Self-Awareness	<p>1. So if I'm in a situation where I'm sitting there and I realize, "There are conversations going on right now and I don't know what they're talking about" or "I should know this and I don't" or "Do you know what? We just briefed one department on Topic A and now I'm in another meeting and I realized what we briefed to them were wrong or incorrect," then I would quickly realize that and want to get back around to make amends or correct that.</p> <p>2. So on the empathy side of the emotional equation, I have a lot of that and I think that helps me in my role as an executive, as a manager, as a leader, because the knowledge, I think, if you have a certain level of intelligence, you can acquire and maintain knowledge, but to really be effective in your role, I think it has to be balanced with the EQ side of things</p>	Cycle 2, Structured Interview
Metacognition	<p>So I found myself saying, "Okay. Other people have done this before me. I'm not the first person who has done this." So I go into this thought process and each of the situations where I didn't have all the information and I felt like it's an uphill battle. I've got challenges. I don't have all the information. It's not</p>	Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2

	like I have an answer book.	
Future Orientation	doing some strategic things and some tactical things which ideally long-term, flash forward a year from now, 80% to 90% of these tactical things will be done by some member on my team because then I'll have a full team -	Cycle 2, Executive Coaching
Adaptability/Flexibility	<p>1.so, we would focus on two main internal customers, leaders running hotels and the team members that work for them. And some of the basic service standards, some of the basic quality principles were met for the end-user which was the frontline team member. But a lot of the analysis and strategy and process improvement methodologies were meant for leaders to learn, grow and adopt.</p> <p>2.But essentially was the same type of work, what was different here was it was a different end-user environment in which our products and services were delivered to customers. So just being in the fast food industry, I had not ever worked for a restaurant company before, which is what we are, we're a restaurant company, we're food and beverage company.</p>	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Reflection	There's an assembly of resources people and all of that that's coming together. And over the next 6 to 12 months, one of my major responsibilities is unifying this team. And setting the vision, saying, "Here's where we're going," and being open and willing to listen and listen first, speak second and make sure I'm going around the room and taking input from all of them before I make a decision. I mean all of those key leadership traits.	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Complex Learning/ Thinking	But I am basically put in there -- these are the things we need to do as a company. These are the things we need to analyze as a company. These are the actions we need to take as a company and if we do that here are some of the results that are going to come from it.	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1

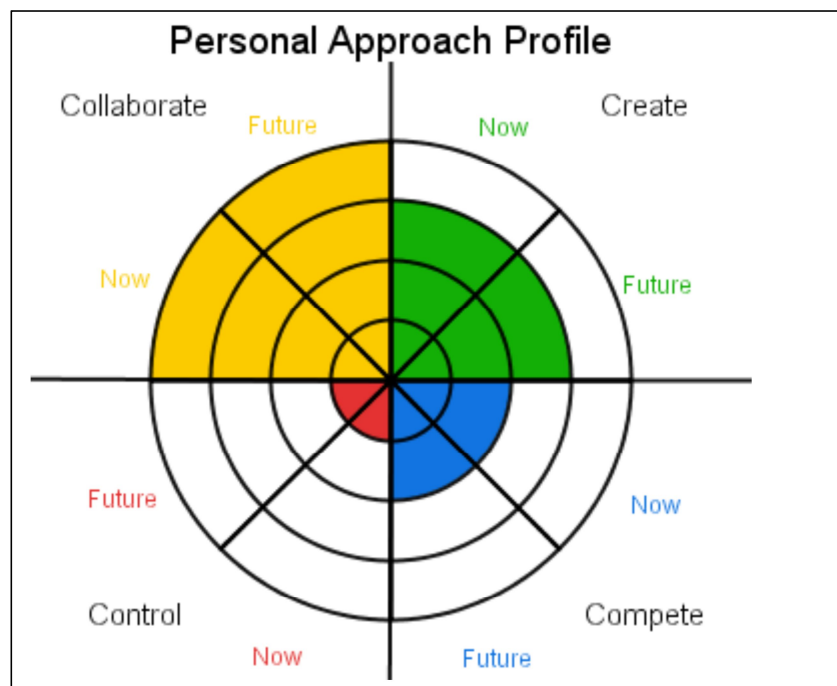
Executive Development	<p>1.I think that the final year 2000 that I really accomplished a lot because of that general and his focus on and belief in leadership which was the same as mine, which was there had to be a balance between the work that you're doing and the accomplishments and the people that you're trying to lead.</p> <p>2.So, the first thing and is -- some of this has already been done because I had to do it in December just to prepare for the New Year. Actually I've been planning since August really for the New Year. But towards the end of the year, I had to think about -- as Martin joined our team, as I was beginning to look for a new part-time 32 person to come in, the first thing I had to do is say, "What's the most important work that we need to get done in 2013 and do it really well.</p> <p>3.but I think that I'm learning and will learn more, I believe. I'm just assuming that I will learn more in this role. It'll probably be the biggest team I've ever had in my career, maybe outside the Air Force. In the Air Force, I had a team, but it was much more of a structured rule based environment.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1 Cycle1, Executive Coaching Cycle 2, Structured Interview</p>
Self-Discovery/aha's	<p>1.I would need to take time with that individual and make sure they understand it's not just about what you know and it's not about what you can do, it's what you do with that within this culture. And so that -- there's going to -- give me a challenge with that.</p> <p>2.I went through my career, I remember doing that, walking through, what I did, where I went, what I was thinking, why I made some of those decisions. I think in reflection on that is I kind of feel like consistent all the way through my career as far as what I've done or decided to do. It's been just a drive for excellence</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2</p>

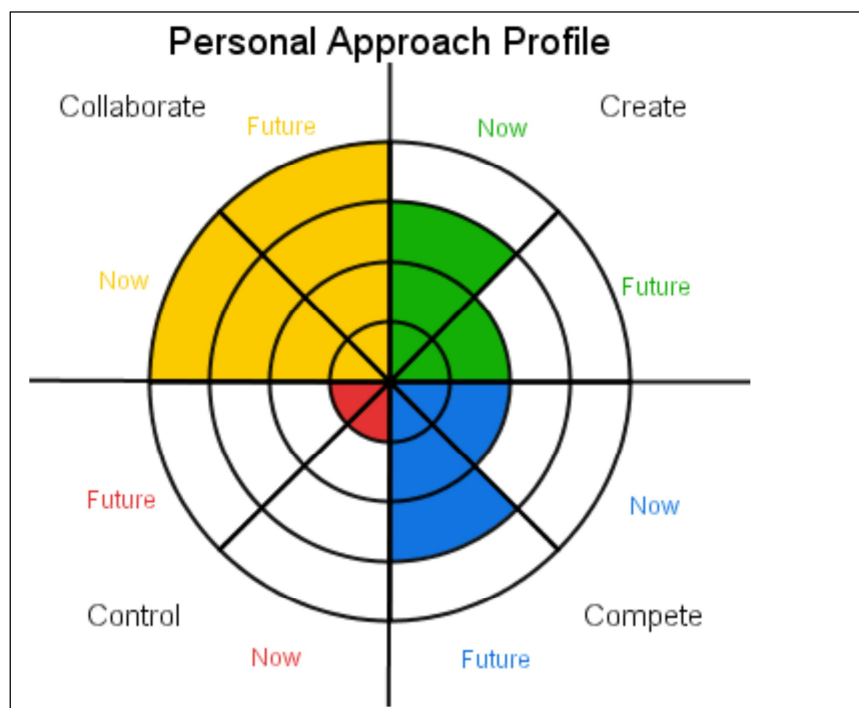
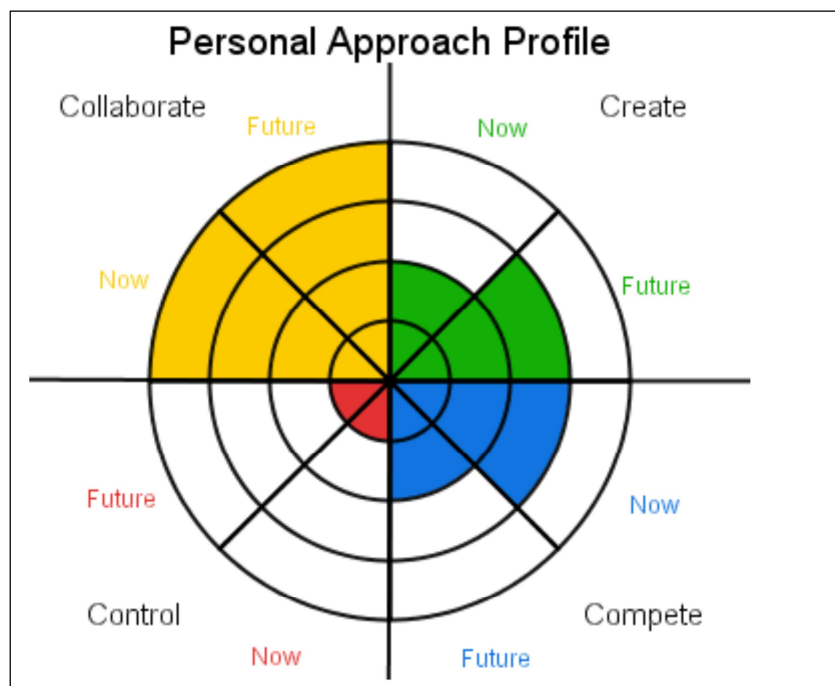
	<p>3. So when I err, I tend to air probably on the side of caring a little too much on that. So I might make a business decision based on some personal feelings, from instincts, rather than just rely on the facts.</p>	
Receptivity to Feedback	<p>1. We got into a lot of that kind of discussion. And at the end of that I kind of nodded out, "You know what? You're really driven towards improvement and you're really driven towards excellence but you need to be in a business that's focused on people even the outcome of the products and services are focused on people because that's where you get your energy. So, let's look into the service sector and see if there's an area that you can translate your sort of hard black and white rules and zero defects of quality and translate that into the people world because you got the intellect, you got the knowledge you just not really energized unless you're with people doing all that.</p> <p>2. and mentors that I met with gave me different options and perspectives, and you know, help me to step outside the box of this comfortable world I was in, but one that I knew was tumultuous that I needed to move out of and help me see that.</p>	Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1
Problem Solving	<p>1. And I come to that interview and I brought my resume in a folder. But I also again, the second part of what I try to differentiate myself was I put together a document that outlined some of the things that I would do if I got the job. And so, it was called a perspective on quality not just another initiative and it was -- I wrote it in April 2006. And it's a four-page document and it basically says in general, "Why quality management is so important?"</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1</p> <p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching</p>

	<p>2. So basically, I went through the categories of the work that we do. So - - and I won't list them all out right now but a couple of examples would be influencing the operations executives here at the home office and informing and equipping them properly so that when they go out and work with their restaurant operators in their regions, they're on point with how they consult to hospitality.</p>	
Paradox Integration	<p>1. then this is going to be great because I'll have the best of both worlds.</p> <p>2. Then I moved in to all of these high energy unconstrained no rules kind of dot com environments where you are the Vice-President, you're the Director and you're the frontline employee, all in one.</p> <p>3. the biggest challenge is probably staying abreast of everything that's going on because I also have things that I personally am working on, while at the same time -- and I guess, let me explain that a little bit. I'm still in a stage where I'm not fully strategic yet because I've been building a team and while I'm building a team, I'm strategic and tactical.</p> <p>4. So it's a balancing act between wanting to give these leaders that are probably anywhere between the ages of 25 and early 30's a wiggle room to develop their own plans, but also give them the guidance enough along the way</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Structured Interview 1 Cycle 1, Executive Coaching Cycle 2, Structured Interview 2 Cycle 2, Executive Coaching</p>
How Time Is Spent	<p>I think the number one thing that will be different is I will be doing a lot more planning and evaluation of how things are going and by -- More planning. I hate to say to be able to take a deep breath for the first time in a while but I'll probably will.</p>	<p>Cycle 1, Executive Coaching</p>

In addition, Participant 3's Competing Values Assessments reveal changes in his personal approach. Results from his pre, mid, and post assessments are shown here, respectively:

Figure 6-3 Participant 3 Pre, Mid and Post CVF Assessments





Wrap Up Cycle 3 Data Details

As noted in Section 4.3.2, Action Planning and Theoretical Connections, Cycle 3 served a functional role to assess changes from Cycle 2 as well as from the overall process, more than as an action intervention itself. As such, the executive coaching step was not included in Cycle 3. Structured Interview 3 and CVF 3 were conducted. Changes to Structured Interview 3 followed from the evaluation and learning's from Cycle 2 and was designed to explore the key insight from Cycle 2, namely, that it is important to help executives resolve tensions between individual/personal competing values. Specifically, question 12j, read *'Regarding the competing values, our sessions revealed some individual competing values such as relationship vs task. Based on the concept of competing values, how might you approach 'synthesizing' or managing your own competing values?'*

Structured Interview 3 also addressed the individual participant's overview of the research process, specific learning's around the main constructs and his perspective on further development needs. Data from this exploration through Structured Interview 3 include these selected participants' indications:

Competing Values –Corporate and Individual

- 'before we started looking at the competing values it was kind of something you knew intuitively or un-intuitively, but I had really positioned them into agreeing—not showing just how competing they can be. I have thought about for example, that we are a heavy process company..on the other hand the group in Location 1 is a research and development center which is very much on the creative side'
- 'I can see the different tensions-I have a default setting to go to the relationships; I put language to those different tensions.
- 'I have now learned that I need to step back from the situations enough to ask whether I'm working out of my default setting (relationship value) or thinking more thoroughly of thoughtfully about my options'

Use of Time –

- ‘It’s easy to go to the easiest thing first as opposed to the hardest and spend exorbitant amount of time in activities that provide limited or no value—but the ability to prioritize or focus on the higher priority is a higher return on actions’

Receptivity to Feedback –

- ‘willingness to be open and honest with their feedback [leaders and mentors]’

Self Awareness (General)

- ‘I need to expand my ability to respond and react and to communicate without being too wordy’
- ‘I guess awareness of my talent and skills, awareness of my weaknesses and areas for improvement, were also major contributors to my success’
- ‘I am high on learning from experience and application to new situations’

Learning Agility Awareness –

- ‘I guess this process as we’ve thought through it, it kind of helped me realize that, while I was always there, I just never really thought about it’
- ‘The first difference maker is just a clear awareness—I’ve had some awareness all along that any difficult decision involves competing values, or else it wouldn’t be a difficult decision. I have a different kind of language and construct that is helpful’

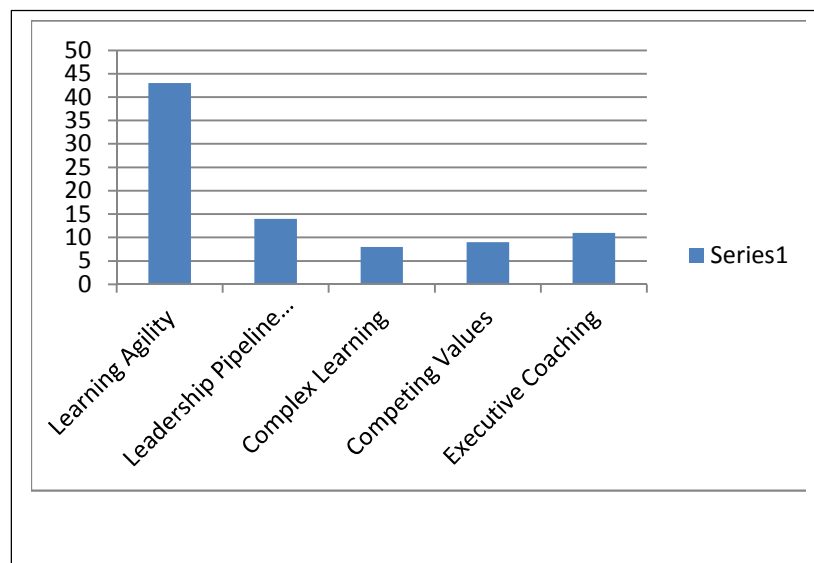
Aha’s and New Insights

- ‘I think one thing that I’ve been straightening out since our last talk is leveraging as many people on the existing team as possible to help onboard new members’
- ‘I will be more consciously aware of the kinds of values and tensions and try to be more consciously aware that I worked out of a kind of relational default’
- ‘I can live in complexity—I can see what we’re doing [with individual competing values/tensions]...it was hopeful for me to know

6.2 Composite/Summary of Data

This section summarizes the individual data from Section 6.1 above to help with further insight and sense making.

Figure 6-4 Composite Number of References In Transcriptions



The significance of this data lies in the prevalence of learning agility references throughout the research transcripts. Whether the reference appeared in terms of the key learning agility definition (learning from experience and application to new situations), or in relationship to one of several sub-constructs, the evidence is clear: these participants possess and are growing with respect to learning agility. Additional insights from this data are addressed in Section 7.

Structured Interview 3 is summarized here, suggesting that each participant recognized learning through the process and described new behaviors as a result. They also noted significant self-discovery moments which contributed to their development, many of which surfaced as a result of stronger awareness around competing values. Finally, they offered self-evaluation evidence for such learning agility dimensions as:

learning from experience, paradox integration, dealing with change, managing complexity, adaptability and flexibility, resilience and reflective thinking. Some expressed a high level of confidence in their abilities, while others noted ongoing development needs. And, notably, the emergence and awareness that individual/personal competing values can be show stoppers for development was addressed.

Participant Comparison and Summary

The structured interviews and executive coaching session transcript data is used in conjunction with the CVF data to analyze the data and reach conclusions/contributions. The table below provides a comparison of both along with summary thoughts from the researcher. Each participant reflects strength and development with respect to learning agility in the transcripts.

The CV Assessments reveal movement in various directions for all three participants. The changes in the assessments align with the interview and executive coaching data. From each participant, the following can be said about changes in their respective CV assessment sequence. In addition to a strong collaboration (yellow) element for all three, each participant reflected change with regard to managing competing values, which per this research has been used to observe learning ability's complex thinking and mental agility components.

Note: two exchanges demonstrating development are included for each participant—the initial exchange along with the initial CVF provided the baselines for existing learning agility; these exchanges reflect learning agility development as defined for this research.

Table 6-4 Participant Comparison Table

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
<p>Learning Agility Growth: Arguments and Evidence From Transcript Data</p> <p>Exchange 1: Question:</p> <p>Well, that does make it complex? How might you manage the complexity?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>I think the biggest issue in my mind is going to be buy-in. We have people on up the chain and down the chain. People with a significant percentage, yes, significant by 30% or 40%, that say I don't believe change is possible as a part of this organization. That's from the staff perspective. I think we have a leadership that does not believe change is possible for this group, but they're there -- because of the cost to get out. They are just counting the time to retire</p> <p>The company has given us a stretched goal that became the plan of, we call it the whitespace, but it's unidentified opportunities above whatever number we came up with. In the 12 years I've been with the company, that stretched goal is laid up there when the plan was built in the prior year, and when you do the first work as adjustment in April, you adjust it</p>	<p>Learning Agility Growth: Arguments and Evidence From Transcript Data</p> <p>Exchange 1: Question: Well, on a scale from one to 10, what is your level of desire to continue to move in the arena of caution, pull back and hold back? What is your interest in that?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>There are two answers of that. It's probably a four, and eight months from now it will be a six. And four months later would be an eight, you know why --</p> <p>-- my energy of it is going to accelerate as we get closer to being out of funds. But my hope would be another way to think creatively.</p> <p><i>Researcher Observation/Insight:</i></p> <p><i>Another emergence around his learning agility... a way to think creatively opens the door for managing complexity, paradox, both-and, etc. He has moved beyond either-or here and is a signal of his learning agility development.</i></p> <p><i>Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions:</i></p> <p><i>The process continues, the aha's and insights emerge.</i></p> <p>Exchange 2: Question: So what</p>	<p>Learning Agility Growth: Arguments and Evidence From Transcript Data</p> <p>Exchange 1: Question:</p> <p>Anyway, so let's go back to what's really on your mind, which is working with your team, helping them accomplish their goals, doing that in such a way that, again, you're micromanaging, at the same time, you're getting the information that you need, and already just in stating it that way, just the way you stated that, you have already moved from an "either/or" paradigm to a "both and," at least the way you stated it. You said, "I need to know what they're doing while at the same time, not micromanage." You didn't state it like -- and it wouldn't make sense anyway, but either I can do this or I can do this. It's already what we call paradox integration, the way you're thinking about it. So, just an observation.</p> <p>Now, of the two -- yeah, let's just say there's a continuum and there are two ends, which is the biggest challenge for you?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>The biggest challenge is</p>

<p>back down to what you've put in to begin with.</p> <p>Now, there's probably a balance there. It's probably, historically, well we'll just take the results from the first quarter then we'll get the bad forecast, then, we're graded against forecast for the rest of the year.</p> <p>But at the same time, there's been not a lot of effort into building a strategy of execution. The strategy has this program, this program, this program and it's been haphazard --. So trying to bring structure to that and get buy in.</p> <p>The complex is the buy in.</p> <p><i>Researcher Observation/Insight: We have moved back to some tactical things/solution oriented, but with an effort to infuse some learning from experience—he is concerned about making the numbers, personal and organizational performance, with recognition that structure is needed—movement toward systems that sustain growth rather than allow for the haphazard. He notes possibility of balance.</i></p> <p><i>Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions: We see signals of balancing paradox...compete/control with the need for change (creativity).</i></p> <p>Exchange 2: Question/Comment:</p> <p>Back to our earlier conversations, you're building some legacy here around, culture</p>	<p>then? Forget about no now. What it's going to take for you to live in alignment with your mission and how important is that to you?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>It's really important to me, and part of the aha, it just happened for me internally. It was part of my energy about the potential new job has been the myth that I can live into that mission by giving a way all this other stuff [by saying yes].</p> <p>If I walk into without new strategies around this stuff, 10 years from now, I've accumulated all that over again.</p> <p>Researcher Observation/Insight:</p> <p><i>Every now and then there is additional value—the big aha was enough but now the participant has related his out-of-alignment life to the fact that unless there is change at the root level, again 2nd or 3rd loop learning, his success in a new environment is threatened. Here we see great steps with regard to his learning agility development—he is self aware, has been receptive to feedback, and has determination about managing the complexity and paradox—no more passive, avoidance behavior.</i></p> <p><i>Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions:</i></p> <p><i>Still building evidence that the process/system has the potential to contribute to learning agility development for executives, capacity for success at the higher pipeline levels, and deeper learning levels and experiences</i></p>	<p>probably staying abreast of everything that's going on because I also have things that I personally am working on, while at the same time -- and I guess, let me explain that a little bit. I'm still in a stage where I'm not fully strategic yet because I've been building a team and while I'm building a team, I'm strategic and tactical. So I am doing some strategic things and some tactical things which ideally long-term, flash forward a year from now, 80% to 90% of these tactical things will be done by some member on my team because when I'll have a full team</p> <p><i>Researcher Observation/Insight:</i></p> <p><i>An instance of the participant's need to deal with competing values is now on the table. He has stated he needs to stay abreast of everything, have all the info he needs yet not bog down the team too much. The different values are in the categories of collaboration and control—not explicitly competing but definitely managing different priorities. He adds his own internal competing 'values' around the strategic and tactical. At the moment he does both—in the future more strategic.</i></p> <p><i>Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions:</i></p>
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<p>change because you believe that unless you change the culture around, now including your two distinctions between innovation creativity and execution, something like that, then that is the long-term future of your organization?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>That's right. That's right.</p> <p><i>Researcher Observation/Insight: This is more evidence of the participant's effort to use what he is learning to empower what he is trying to do with the people and the organization. There is now a great deal of reflection going on, more so than before the 2nd CVF was presented.</i></p> <p><i>Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions: The increase in reflective moments is indicative of development and supports the arguments around the process itself, a systems approach using an assessment, structured dialog and coaching, as being one that contributes to executive learning agility development. This prompted the next question/comment.</i></p>		<p><i>While the CVF uses competing quadrants to explain its framework, this and other examples in the research support the use of the framework to observe development/growth where ever there is quadrant movement. In this case, collaboration and control both have an internal organizational focus and it is equally valid to use the dilemma in managing these two as it is in managing diagonally opposite 'values'</i></p> <p>Exchange 2: Question: So, I guess, maybe a place to start is some of your reflection from last time something that you discovered as a result of our session, discoveries, breakthroughs, insights, just general reflection, your thoughts on that?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>I think in reflection on that is I kind of feel like consistent all the way through my career as far as what I've done or decided to do. It's been just a drive for excellence.</p> <p>I think within each career or each job that I've taken on in my career that even within those roles of those companies,</p> <p>New responsibilities that would come up that I would have to rise up and all of a sudden jump into bigger shoes and have some concern of, "Can I do this? Is this over my head? Am I capable of doing this job?"</p>
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		<p>So, that kind of came up as I thought about that journey.</p> <p>Feeling of 'it didn't matter where I was, what I was doing,' and I wasn't going to be satisfied unless I was either tied to an organization that's focused on excellence, in creating excellence, and believes in it</p> <p>Researcher: Yes, you have had a very fascinating career in different cross points as we've talked about where either you're all the hats or as here, you've got a team you're developing and you're working with your peers and so on and so forth.</p> <p>Response: But I think that I'm learning and will learn more, I believe. I'm just assuming that I will learn more in this role. It'll probably be the biggest team I've ever had in my career, maybe outside the Air Force.</p> <p><i>Researcher Observation/Insight:</i></p> <p><i>This participant reflects more changes in his career progression (in corporate roles) than the others. As such he has definitely demonstrated his capacity to deal with change and bring experience from a past scenario to apply it to a new one.</i></p> <p><i>Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions:</i></p> <p><i>Confirms again his learning agility traits. The team issue discussed in our last coaching session offers opportunity for</i></p>
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		<i>further development and his approach displays a lot of problem solving. While present in past role, the newness of this challenge confirms some level of growth and development.</i>
<p>CVF Observations and Evidence:</p> <p>Participant 1 noted consistently that he wanted to create a culture of creativity in order to become more competitive in the marketplace. Hence we see an increase in green (create), a decrease in red (control) and relatively stable yellow (collaborate) between CV assessment 1 and CV assessment 2. The changes (ultimately a strong decrease) in blue (compete) are partially explained by his assumption that creativity will improve the company's competitive position. After Cycle 2, however, the movement back toward control (red) suggests that this participant improved in the ability to synthesize the opposites and re-emphasized his personal affinity for process and the organization's affinity for systems. Not only did the control (red) and create (green) balance, but a small increase in compete (blue) indicates a moderate move to integrate collaborate (yellow) and compete (blue). Hence, based on the design and foundational theories of this</p>	<p>CVF Observations and Evidence:</p> <p>Participant 2 described his need for growth in management and control issues throughout his interviews and coaching sessions. Hence, his CV assessments also reflect consistency. The movement in red (control) in assessment #2 is an indicator of this insight and also reflects a capacity to integrate the opposites: it was a start whereby he synthesized the create (green) and control (red) opposites. His third assessment reflects his growing interest in supporting the organizational values around compete, in this with regard to managing the organizational/grant funding issues. With a strong move to compete (blue) following Cycle 2, the inference in this case is not to 'compete' in the traditional meaning, since he represents an academic institution; rather it implies a desired strength to integrate organizational goals with his otherwise strong collaborate and create elements. This integration, noted by the collaborate (yellow) and compete (blue) balance suggests his positive movement and development around learning</p>	<p>CVF Observations and Evidence:</p> <p>Participant 3's CV assessments also align with his research data—yellow (collaborate) is a high value within his organization. (More than once he used the phrase, 'we are a culture of consensus'). That said, his own role and responsibility requires significant creativity (green) while not compromising the organization's competitive factors (blue). His second CVF assessment revealed that the control quadrant (red) remained somewhat stable, but the integration between collaborate (yellow) and compete (blue) increased at least with regard to his future thinking, noting a need to be more conscious of that corporate/ organizational value. Following Cycle 2 Participant 3's paradox integration data evidenced more growth in the complementary value between collaboration (yellow) and create (green) than between opposites. That said, this movement does not invalidate a claim regarding learning agility development. It</p>

<p>research (i.e., use the CVF as an observation tool along with qualitative data found in the interview and coaching sessions) , the participant exhibits development with regard to learning agility.</p>	<p>agility. It also suggested his interest in the need for structure and systems to strengthen his and the organization’s focus on systemic results and management.</p>	<p>merely reflects synthesis in another form—complementary vs opposites. For all three assessments for this participant, the collaborate (yellow) and control (red) remained stable. Changes were in the other two quadrants, indicating moderate development with learning agility by the standards and presuppositions of this study. Looking at his structured interviews and coaching sessions, however, suggests more learning agility development than indicated by the CVF assessments. Again, the interviews and coaching sessions support other evidence of this participants learning agility development. For example. number of participant 3’s learning agility comments throughout the research exceeded the other two combined. While we cannot support evidence of Participant 3’s learning agility development via the CVF assessments, other evidence does.</p>
<p>Researcher Summary</p> <p>Participant One’s learning agility development lies in his strengths around managing complexity and uncertainty. He also shows strength in using past experience in new situations, resilience, value balance and paradox integration. This is supported in the researcher/participant</p>	<p>Researcher Summary</p> <p>Participant Two’s learning agility development lies in his strengths around managing change as well as uncertainty. In addition, his self-awareness, reflection, knowing about knowing, capacity to learn from experience and balance values contribute further with regard to his learning agility development.</p>	<p>Researcher Summary</p> <p>Participant Three’s learning agility development is also related to his strengths in managing change and complexity. Combined with his reflection, receptivity to feedback, problem solving and metacognition/knowing about knowing traits, this participant</p>

<p>exchanges as well as changes in his CVF series. Regarding CVF changes, the movement to more creativity in CVF2 is indicative of his recognition that most of his team is creative and the organization would benefit by more creativity to addresses needed culture shifts. In the end, he reflected his own comfort with structure and process while retaining some level of creativity, and balancing his strong collaborative strength. The participant noted more than once that his comfort level is with processes and structure, and that the organization also valued process. Hence, his willingness to move away from his comfort zone at some level reflects a personal desire to grown and develop.</p>	<p>Another significant element is his receptivity to feedback, a trait which led to significant insights, some at double and triple loop learning levels. A significant finding involved this participant's understanding of his personal competing values and his determination to manage these more effectively. Participant Two's CVF observations reflect changes as well. Movement from CVF1 to CVF2 suggests his recognition that his role required more emphasis on internal control and processes, especially with regard to his fiscal responsibilities. Moving to CVF3 reflected a translation of that reality to more balance between his strong collaborative bent with the creative and organizational results needs. He appeared to see the results piece as more related to creativity than control. That said, a significant movement for his growth involved a reduced emphasis on collaboration, linked to his value to be liked.</p>	<p>demonstrated definitive learning agility development. Finally, he also recognized competing values and the need to balance these, especially as related to building his high functioning team. His CVF observations note, as with the others, significant collaborative emphasis. While there was no change in this quadrant, movement in the creative and compete quadrants suggest a need for more focus on the compete component, balanced with creativity. Interestingly there was no change in the control quadrant on the CVF, despite indications in the structured interviews and coaching sessions that processes and standards are needed. The researcher believes this is explained by the possibility that control and processes are somewhat understood as both existing and self-evident in terms of need. In other words, he did not see a need to increase this quadrant even though it reflects low. It is also explained by the organization's emphasis in competing strongly in the marketplace. The lack of change in the collaboration quadrant is possibly explained by the organization's strong culture of consensus decision-making.</p>
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Diary Reflections

A composite summary of the researcher's diary reflections indicates that all of the required protocols were enforced relative to IRB. In addition, the researcher was cognizant of and intentional about mitigating bias as much as possible by limiting the preliminary research information given to participants. The participants were all engaged, including the researcher-participant.

Several development moments and aha's for the researcher resulted in a more robust study with possibilities noted for further research as well as theoretical and practical contributions. Among those are the thoughts around a meta-construct competing values instrument and the theoretical lens of 'awareness in a specific area as being causal to growth in that area'.

Finally, the researcher was careful to manage the protocols/cycle steps, the integrity of the executive coaching model and the research domain concurrently. All of this 'in the moment', learning 'on the fly', and remaining adaptable and flexible. In essence, the researcher believes she developed as an executive leader as a result of doing the research.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

So what does all this data mean and how does it support conclusions and answer the research question? This is addressed in Chapter 7. It is divided into 7.1, a general section which discusses all aspects of the research from the researcher's perspective, based on the data findings and results, and Sections 7.2- 7.5 which focus on insights and conclusions with supporting arguments.

7.1 Discussion: General Research

From its inception, this researcher's interest in the broader field of 'leadership' and the possible connection of executive coaching as a model for leadership development served as the foundation for the current study. More specificity and clarity around theoretical framework, boundaries and relevancy led to its main focus on 'executive' development (a subset of leadership), learning agility as an indicator of executive development and success, and executive coaching as an intervention, all possible through the very relevant methodology of Action Research. These constructs are defined and supported herein, along with several related concepts.

Beginning with the selection of the methodological approach, again, Action Research seemed most appropriate due to its cyclical nature, researcher participation, and opportunity for exploration. Such exploration also demands a theoretical framework for action planning and, in this case, a way to evaluate and observe findings over the life of the research—meaning, at a minimum, a Cycle 1 intervention, followed by evaluation, a Cycle 2 approach, also followed by evaluation. Due to the constructs related to the research, an existing evaluation tool was selected to complement other observation artifacts. The latter included structured interviews while the former was addressed through the Competing Values Assessment. A third cycle, Cycle 3, was included as a wrap-up/evaluation feature. It did not include an

executive coaching session because no further interviews or coaching interventions were planned. It did, however, address changes from the Cycle 2 intervention via these two tools.

The initial planning/Cycle 1, supported through the theoretical framework as well as literature, involved a baseline assessment, an initial interview and an executive coaching session. As previously noted, early evidence from Cycle 1 supported the theoretical framework in that key concepts emerged through the interviews and coaching sessions. Prior to beginning the actual research, the required conversation and forms were completed, signatures gathered and very general research information was supplied.

Structured Interview 1 was used to gather the initial information, providing direction for the remainder of the research. From those initial interviews, it became apparent that all of the participants exhibited some level of learning agility traits as well as the related constructs of complex learning. Among the indications were specific examples of managing complexity and uncertainty, change agility, resilience, learning from experience, self-awareness, metacognition, reflection, leadership pipeline indicators of executive development, problem solving, paradox integration, adaptability and flexibility, and receptivity to feedback. All of these indicators made sense from this perspective: these participants had already reached the top three levels of the leadership pipeline—they *had already* made successful career transitions and sustained their career advancement over time. In other words, this evidence supports the Lominger (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2004) findings that learning agility is *the* key indicator of executive success.

These participants demonstrated levels of learning agility which accounted for their current success.

The initial interview also surfaced specific challenges within their context. These challenges were prioritized, with the idea that one would be selected for the subsequent executive coaching session. This approach provided integrity with regard to alignment with the coaching profession's precept of 'working from the client's agenda', while offering a space for self-discovery within the research domain. In other words, the pre-existence of learning agility traits (prior to beginning the research), did not imply the non-existence of additional gaps for growth and development in the same domain.

While further confirmation of these traits followed from the initial executive coaching sessions, new areas of growth and application did emerge. Among the discoveries were increased self-awareness, a longer ‘future’ orientation (time span over which the executive processes thinking and information), and specific self-discovery aha’s such as: ‘part of what makes this all the more difficult is the nature of grant funding—we’ve got a lot of money whereas everybody else in the system is dealing with issues of budget’, -- additional future orientation insights, and (of major interest), *individual* competing values. The emergence of the latter is particularly relevant to insights and contributions as discussed in Sections 7.2 - 7.5 and 8.

Combined with the diary entries of the researcher/participant, a number of reflections from Cycle 1 and related evaluation led to a small, but interesting enhancement for Cycle 2.

Specifically, it appeared to the researcher that, while all of the participants exhibited learning agility traits, their formal awareness of these traits and the role these traits had played in the executive’s current success was limited. In order to mitigate bias as much as possible, there was little preliminary discussion of learning agility or the intent of the research, meaning that the participants were not informed or trained on the subject; they did not know the definitions, sub-constructs, etc., and had no way to codify the abstractions. The insight from Cycle 1 led to a slight theoretical addition for Cycle 2, namely as mentioned previously, an exploration of the notion that ‘awareness of skills/traits’ might, in fact, accelerate one’s development with regard to the same skills/traits.

Moving to Cycle 2, a few questions designed to explore this theory enhancement were included in Structured Interview 2. Acknowledgement around this idea surfaced, indicating a positive response to the theoretical consideration. With only moderate evidence as expressed through the interview, the question remains and can be addressed as part of a future research opportunity.

More significant with regard to the Cycle 2 Structured Interview was additional evidence around the specific learning agility and executive development constructs. Most prevalent were learning from

experience, self-awareness (of traits other than learning agility traits), adaptability/flexibility, reflection, complex learning, change agility, use of time, paradox integration and individual competing values

The Cycle 2 executive coaching sessions were also based on challenges/issues brought forward by the respective participants. Interestingly, each participant had a different challenge for Executive Coaching Session 2, a scenario which added value to the participant as well as the quality of the research. Self-discovery ‘aha’s’ through these Cycle 2 Executive Coaching sessions included such moments as:

‘I have known before that I lead with feelings and relationships in leadership and count that as strength; but I also left here more aware of my liabilities related to always leading with feeling stuff. I’m more impressed with how hard it’s going to be for me to make hard decisions when it hurts relationships.’

This discovery by the Participant also led to discovery by the researcher that the importance of individual/personal competing values had equal, if not more, import to executives’ need to integrate tensions in order to facilitate their own capacities to reframe decisions.

From another participant, growth with respect to ‘future orientation and use of time’ was demonstrated when he noted ‘I’m doing some strategic things and some tactical things, which ideally long term—flash forward a year from now. 80% - 90% of these tactical things will be done by some member of my team’.

The final steps in the Action Research included a third competing values assessment and a third structured interview. These third interviews provided further insight as well as summary observations from each participant.

7.2 Key Conclusions

Key conclusions are provided in the table below and include theoretical and practical implications.

Together, the conclusions address the research question: **Why do self-discovery learning interventions impact learning agility for Senior Executive Development?**

They are:

1. The Participants in this study demonstrated Learning Agility Development as defined for this research, providing evidence that Learning Agility can be developed
2. Executive Coaching and Related Self-Discovery Constructs contribute more to Learning Agility Executive Development when the executive coach offers a fluid approach which includes significant engagement and mutual dialog as well as inquiry.
3. Learning Agility Development is related to one's ability to manage Competing Values, especially Competing Values that are unique to the individual.
4. Individual Awareness and its connection to reflexivity, and the movement of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is a key finding related to senior executive learning agility development.
5. A Systems Approach to Learning Agility Executive Development which includes a systemic framework, a defined process/structure, and individual customization is indicated for senior level executives.

Each is detailed below with further explanation and related theoretical and practical implications.

Table 7-1 Conclusion Arguments and Implications

Conclusion	Further Explanation and Argument/Support	Theoretical Implication	Practical Implication
1. The Participants in this study demonstrated Learning Agility Development as defined for this research, providing evidence that Learning Agility can be developed	Given the learning agility development definition for this research, all of the participants reflected an understanding of and the application of key learning agility constructs and concepts. In addition, their respective organizational	The application of existing development theory <i>along with new</i> theory which includes reflexivity, a systemic framework and individual customization as revealed in this research can be used in executive development	Offer the Executive Development Methodology derived from this study to executives for their development based on the theoretical findings.

	<p>situations combined with their role in the organization influenced changes in their CVF outcomes over the term of the research. These changes are explainable in terms of their situations and roles and offer evidence of one of the foundational components of this research; viz., the capacity to manage competing values. Further specific support is detailed in Section 6.2, which compares each participant's development tracking.</p>		
<p>2. Executive Coaching and Related Self-Discovery Constructs contribute more to Learning Agility Executive Development when the executive coach offers a fluid approach which includes significant engagement and mutual dialog as well as inquiry.</p>	<p>Section 7.3 below provides argument support through an analysis of the coach-participant exchanges. Several specific exchanges are provided, each with insights and implications from the researcher. Further support for the Executive Coaching model as an executive development tool is in Section 2, Literature Review.</p>	<p>This extended version of executive coaching moves beyond many generally accepted coaching theory and adds a significant level of direct interaction and dialog to the coaching process. It allows for a level of engagement from the coach where opinions, suggestions and observations operate to enhance self-discovery.</p>	<p>This finding is reflected in the practical methodology developed in this research in Steps 1-5</p>
<p>3. Learning Agility Development is related to one's ability to manage Competing Values, especially Competing Values that are unique to the individual</p>	<p>The research process, specifically Cycle 2 and conversations with Participant 2 surfaced this conclusion. In that scenario, the individual's personal competing values were revealed, providing significant moments of insight and subsequent shifts, allowing him the freedom to move forward with his</p>	<p>A theoretical finding from Cycle 2, this conclusion implies an extension to the competing values framework whereby both organizational values and individual values can be observed and managed with regard to paradox and integration.</p>	<p>A step in the proposed practical contribution/ methodology provides for baseline and change assessment with regard to individual competing values.</p>

	executive development opportunities. See Section 6 for further discussion and the impact related to Cycle 2 theory adjustment and this conclusion.		
4. Individual Awareness and its connection to reflexivity, the movement of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is a key finding related to senior executive learning agility development.	Section 7.4 below offers substance to this claim, presenting additional exchanges between researcher and participant. The insights and implications noted support the benefit and contribution of the dialog and coaching process in helping executives find critical moments of learning and move from tacit to explicit levels of understanding.	The theoretical implication of this finding is that critical moments of learning occur as awareness increases through the systematic development process. Extensions to tacit and explicit knowledge theory are related to the use the extended coaching theory in Finding 2.	A step in the proposed development methodology provides for the coach and client to leverage critical learning moments by posing questions that generate further reflection.
5. A Systems Approach to Learning Agility Executive Development which includes a systemic framework, a defined process/structure, and individual customization is indicated for senior level executives.	Section 7. 5 below offers a stronger explanation and support for a an approach to executive development that is based on a structured system/methodology. Evidence here is from the research where participants indicated their own propensity toward systems and the systematic process of the research itself indicated empirically founded outcomes. Of particular relevance is the need for executives at the senior levels (who are responsible for organizational results) have an organizational context framework for observing developmental changes.	A contribution to knowledge from this research is a theoretical framework for senior executive learning agility development which offers both a systematic approach as well as an assessment process which captures systemic issues—both organizational and individual. This represents a departure from traditional development theories where individual assessment tools (such as 360's) and IDP's (individual development plans) are limited to the individual leader, without consideration of organizational context and values.	The contribution to practice is a methodology based on this theoretical foundation along with other theoretical findings from the research.

7.3 Executive Coaching Approach and Interaction

Important to this conclusion is the researcher's transformation with respect to coaching style and beliefs. Among other things, the researcher discovered through the process the value of more exchange, more direct communication around observations and opinions and more reflective interaction with the participants. This development is noted in the transcript reflections as well as in the researcher's diary as shown below:

Question/Comment: That's innovative itself. Again, they are learning agility constructs to be resilient, figuring out the matter. How was this coaching session? What are some key take aways?

Response: Again, it's the awareness of the winner piece and it's not just those that are hurting. I think it will be important for the ones who will be RIFd though to see from me and my engagement with them that my respect for them has not changed. ‘

Two, to keep the other innovations going on at the same time.

Researcher Observation/Insight: Participant confirms again that his level of awareness [of options, strategies, his learning agility traits, etc.] has been a significant outcome of the process. Implicit in his comments is the complete process—not just the assessment, not just the interviews, not just the coaching—as seen in other responses as well.

Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions: The bi-directional engagement, coach to participant and vice versa, made the coaching session more effective. This finding/implication needs to be included as part of the research conclusions and findings.

Question/Researcher Comment:

Yeah, probably and we're talking about your own leadership, we've already said that you have a higher value on the relational components,

Thinking of ways to introduce that kind of thinking [re: results] into the room while still being sensitive to the relational cause and your commitment to the organization or in this case to manage that well, to manage, as well as lead particularly the fiscal part which was part of the angst. So, that was a clear and other places where you demonstrated that you have some learning agility development opportunities

Your self-awareness is one of those and you are very self-aware of your learning style and relationships that you've ought to learn and grow. I mentioned the paradox integration to both/and thinking. You came to that. There's probably more of that than you might be aware of. Certainly, dealing with ambiguity, you're very aware when you hit ambiguity. It doesn't feel good not to know.

Response: I have been aware, not always courageous when I hit the impasse but I'm aware of when I'm dealing with creative tensions. When two of my values are clashing, I can see it. I just don't always proceed courageously through it.

Researcher Observation/Insight: The researcher is clearly becoming more engaged in giving feedback and observations, evidence of the researcher's transformation with regard to her style and beliefs about systematic coaching, a process that includes dialog and inquiry. The participant is continuing to show evidence of his dilemma with regard to his value conflicts/competition. And his to-date responses to same. He has been reflecting on what we have been doing and the implications.

Question/Researcher Comment:

What we're on to right now is so core. It is essential for the next phase of your life and journey and career.

So, what needs to happen? Would it be good to start with the skill sets of how to do this? It sounds like to me you have the motivation or you're soon getting it. Desire for sure and awareness for sure. It's too early without practice and the skill sets, in my opinion, it's too early for you to see anything both-and here, but I can promise you there is a both-and.

Response: I mean, one of the things that strikes for me already is I've got other values that are pretty high. That is, I still have some financial stress I need to care for. They're going to be some things I might need to do because they pay me money that may or may not be central to that mission, certainly not contrary to it.

I am going to need to say, "yes" to some things that are not central to that mission.

Researcher Observation/Insight: A slight side bar here as the participant reflects. The researcher/coach is also more engaged with feedback, opinions, observations etc. the point was to give the participant space to continue to reflect without press in on managing the paradox...the opposites in his value system. He landed on yet a new dimension of thinking—that some values are complementary, not contrary and are ok to assimilate into strategy.

Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions: More evidence that the more fluid approach to coaching has potential to uncover significant meaning. In this case, the researcher coach gave permission to the participant to wrestle a bit more with managing his complexity. And shared an opinion, again not the typical style of this coach.

7.4 Awareness and Reflexivity

The impact of this transformation along with the general research process produced a number of learning agility development responses from the participants regarding two significant and related concepts: 1) Individual awareness and its connection to moving from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge; and 2) deeper learning, with some evidence of double and triple loop moments. Evidence for this is reflected in the exchanges below.

Question: Well, let us go after the different way. Nice and liked, it's not congruent with results-is that the assumption?

Response: This is what strikes me. A part of me says nice and liked is congruent with results and that if I create the culture to use the language of emotional intelligence, if I create a culture of resonance where people walk to come to work because it is a pleasant place to be, that is going to generate better results. So, there's a place I think for nice and liked and results. Back on what I said earlier though, the limitation of that is when people are not internally motivated, when people just don't do their job well.

Yeah. It does it. The other part of what hit me about the results, you're writing the results on the board is my impact on the things that I need, I most need to do is being diminished by the fact that I say "yes "to things that are primary in my mission.

Researcher Observation/Insight: There was a major breakthrough here. Working through this, it became apparent that there was a gap between the participant's espoused values and his lived out values. He actually has values that are higher than his relational values—the latter has been a default by habit and history. So now his individual internal value conflict is even bigger—not between two opposing values but between better and best with regard to his own hierarchy.

Question/Comment: One observation I would make is that you quickly learned from your very recent experience in working at this level and with this team and applied that experience to creating these strategies and directions. And so the Question I have is, how aware were you consciously, intellectually to some of these strengths and skills and capacities around your learning from experience and applying it? Now, my Question is about your awareness of that. Is it just coming to you? Are you more aware of it since we've been talking and coaching?

And do you have a thought around how that accelerates anyone with their own development in the use of the skills? And the competing values awareness? I.e. how is the CV impacting you?

Response: I think there is an iterative type of answer. [Aware] that I never have all of the information that if you weigh past the 80% of the information, you make a decision, you're behind it. That always resonates with me and part of that comes from my experience of being back in the military. [But aware that I have guidance, regulations, etc.] , not necessarily skills. But I think the shift in the awareness is that when I see things that resonate with me. I immediately start looking for application because if it resonates with me, chances are those immediate applications are somewhere. because when you get to the awareness, I think I've told you before with regard to just my coaching before we started any of this, the most satisfying moment in any coaching engagement is I never thought of it that way.

When I just got to this, the competing nature of the structure just absolutely resonated because every one of these is a balance. It's kind of like a wheel sitting on a pinpoint balance. And you have to live with the level of tilt that you can live with. If you go all the way to one side, it will tilt all the way to the side. So you've got to balance some of that, but you may want it to go away in one side for a given time or a given situation. You don't want it to go all the way, because now you lose flexibility.

Researcher Observation/Insight: Here the participant is talking about his awareness that emerged from the assessment as well as our conversations and how it's resonated with him. As a result, he is going for application by incorporating the collaboration and creativity pieces into his own comfort with process/systems and the organizations need for profit.

Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions: To the extent that his awareness via the process we are in and his use of the information, his development is being accelerated. His desire to balance the competing values and work towards that end also indicates development.

7.5 Argument For a Systems Approach To Executive Learning Agility Development

In this research, where the executives were among the top leadership pipeline levels, two arguments support the need for a systemic assessment and process for executive learning agility development. First, the positive outcomes from this research around the learning agility development of the participants supports a systemic process similar to the one used in the research. In other words, some empirical evidence exists as to the usefulness of an approach that incorporates such elements as a systemic assessment, a structured interview/dialog process and an executive coaching component. The results from the data, both the CVF assessments and the transcripts demonstrate learning agility growth and can be used as a beginning point for further research. A framework such as the CVF is needed for organizational context, despite the fact that this research focused on individual development not organizational performance. That said, the two are intricately related, and demand an approach which offers both contexts. See Section 6 for more detail on the results and discussion by participant. In addition, the excerpts below offer further evidence that the CVF framework and the systematic process contributed to development and insights.

Question: How did the process helped you learn to learn?

Response: Well it was kind of systematic approach. We started out with an assessment without having much of or any particular background.

So the assessment and then taking that and that the questions had a priority-- sometimes of the four answers three or four of them were good answers.

And so having to rank order them really makes you ask yourself some hard questions and help determine which was how I am or how the situation is and which was how I wanted it to be. And where I was in the process and where there actions I could take that would move it from where it might be to where I would want it to be.

And so being able to kind of work through that you know from a survey perspective and then sit down and discuss and be coach around some of the issues associated with that I'm experiencing in real time and then watching that as we've gone through. It's been you know freeing in a lot of ways and being able to you know and I look at look at the -- it's a wisdom growth methodology in that and as your learning grows, your wisdom grows and your judgments become stronger and not so rigid in areas that I may have been rigid in before.

Question: Well, let us go after the different way. Nice and liked, it's not congruent with results—is that the assumption?

Response:

This is what strikes me. A part of me says nice and liked is congruent with results and that if I create the culture to use the language of emotional intelligence, if I create a culture of resonance where people walk to come to work because it is a pleasant place to be, that is going to generate better results. So, there's a place I think for nice and liked and results. Back on what I said earlier though, the limitation of that is when people are not internally motivated, when people just don't do their job well.

Yeah. It does it. The other part of what hit me about the results, you're writing the results on the board is my impact on the things that I need, I most need to do is being diminished by the fact that I say "yes "to things that are primary in my mission.

Researcher Observation/Insight: There was a major breakthrough here. Working through this, it became apparent that there was a gap between the participant's espoused values and his lived out values. He actually has values that are higher than his relational values—the latter has been a default by habit and history. So now his individual internal value conflict is even bigger—not between two opposing values but between better and best with regard to his own hierarchy.

Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions: The process/system can and does produce significant aha's—self-discovered in this case as he came to his own conclusion via the process. This particular breakthrough represents definitive movement toward triple loop.

At this point in the process with an executive, it is important to have in place, as embedded in the system, a way to stay with and leverage the big moments like this. A way to keep the executive moving forward. What is essential here is a question or inquiry that forces the executive to a decision point.

Second, the exchanges between the researcher and the participants indicate the respective participants' need for structure and systemic solutions for their complex worlds. Hence, their appreciation and understanding of this kind of approach is relevant and meaningful. In addition, the organizational processes and needs typically demand this type of approach. A selected exchange is provided here:

Question: So again, just observe how well you ask the right questions before going after the solutions. It might be interesting and certainly helpful to describe what you meant when you said the one thing, "Let's focus on forming my team and getting that piece."

Response:

It will be important as a team that I allow them at time to get the work done, that they are not bogging down with administration or they're not bogging down in meetings, that they are not bogged down with things that prevent them from actually executing what we're trying to execute. But then while we do that, scheduling a cycle of communication and meetings and such that enable us to collaborate on the things we need to collaborate on, get help from others that we need help on and then just general knowledge sharing.

Researcher Observation/Insight: First signs of competing values—collaborate vs. compete/control. The participant has revealed an underlying awareness that he will need to balance these competing values.

Relevance to arguments around findings and contributions: Some evidence here that participant is or has the capacity to grow in learning agility with respect to paradox integration and managing the competing values. There are also inferences with regard to the need for systems and procedures.

8 CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 Contributions to Theory

The contributions to theory extend existing theoretical frameworks, creating a new theory for executive development learning agility. The extensions are related to the existing theoretical bodies of knowledge, including 1) executive development and 2) executive coaching and 3) learning agility. A new theory is articulated by combining these extensions, incorporating other existing theory from this research along with conclusions. It purports a systems approach to executive development and as such the new theory is systematic (has a system/process) with elements that touch systemic issues—organizationally and individually.

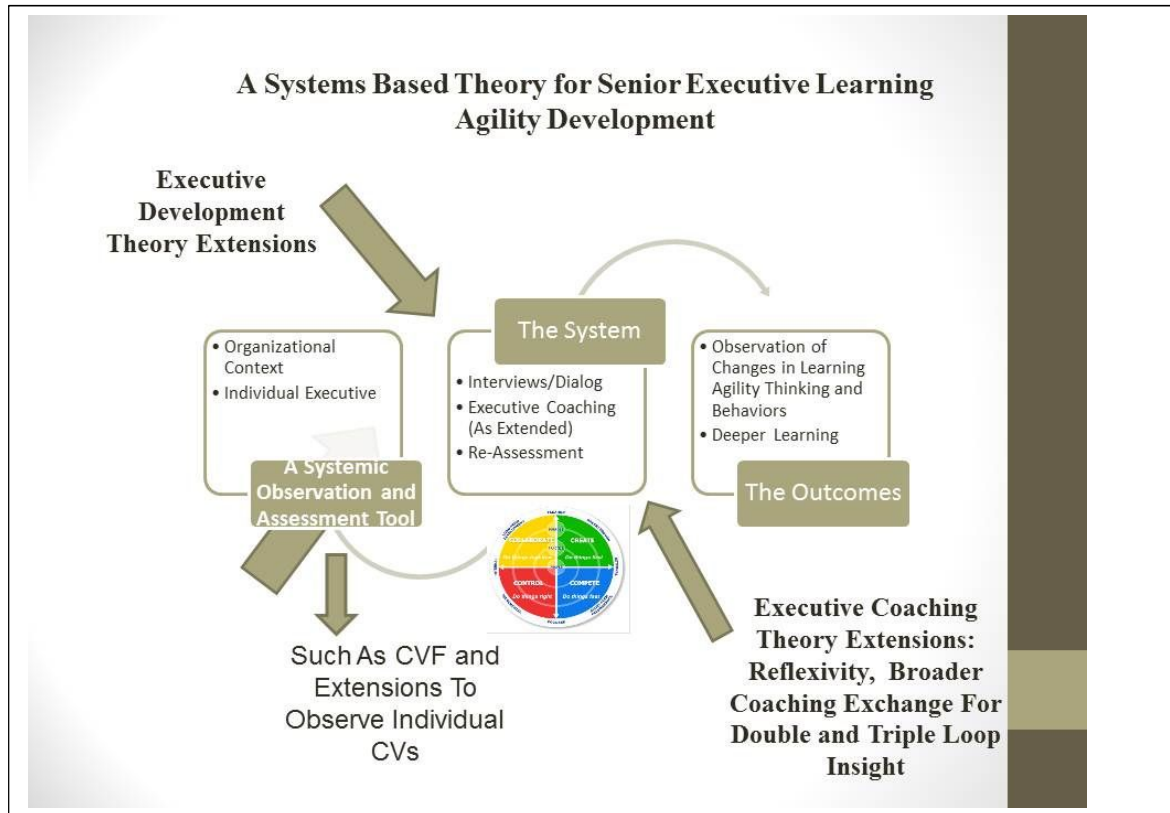
1. Extension to Executive Development Theories— The existing literature focuses on executive development from the perspective of alternative modalities. Often referred to as leadership development (which can include anyone from line manager to CEO), some of these are classroom training, on-line training, action learning, and more recently, executive coaching. Each of these may or may not include experiential learning, meaning the modalities may be complemented with hands-on, behavioral assignments; most notably and almost by definition Action Learning fits this. The theoretical extension offered from this study is three-fold. First the target audience is confined to the top three levels of the leadership pipeline: business manager, group manager, enterprise manager. Second, a systems model, involving process, steps and events is most useful for executive development at these levels. Third, senior executive learning agility development system needs to include an observation/assessment tool such as the CVF. The reason for this element is to provide a framework which is designed to address systemic issues as they related to creating organizational value and individual learning agility. In other words a framework that deals with organizational as well as individual competing values.
2. Extension to Executive Coaching Theory – While executive coaching continues to be elusive in terms of definition, application and experience, the theory used in this research has been primarily based on the International Coach Federation’s constructs and definitions. The ICF-based theory presupposes such attributes as the client’s ability and right to determine agenda and solve problems through certain well-defined coaching competencies offered by the coach. Many of these competencies are inquiry oriented, with significant emphasis on Socratic learning. This study demonstrated to the researcher that a more robust approach, especially one that promotes

reflection through dialog and interviews, offers additional value and strengthens outcomes. The key constructs for this theoretical extension would be:

- a. Reflexivity – As defined earlier in dissertation, this concept involves producing immediate response, a critical learning moment. It often results in the revelation of explicit knowledge from tacit knowledge.
- b. Double and Triple Loop Coaching – The level of dialog in this theoretical extension means that more direct communication takes place, with the coach offering not only observations but opinions, reflections and assumption level inquiry. While further research is warranted on this construct, there is some evidence that the expanded and mutual dialog will produce deeper learning's, especially at the double and triple loop levels.

New theory developed primarily from these extensions/constructs looks something like the model below:

Figure 8-1 A Systems Theory for Senior Executive Learning Agility Development



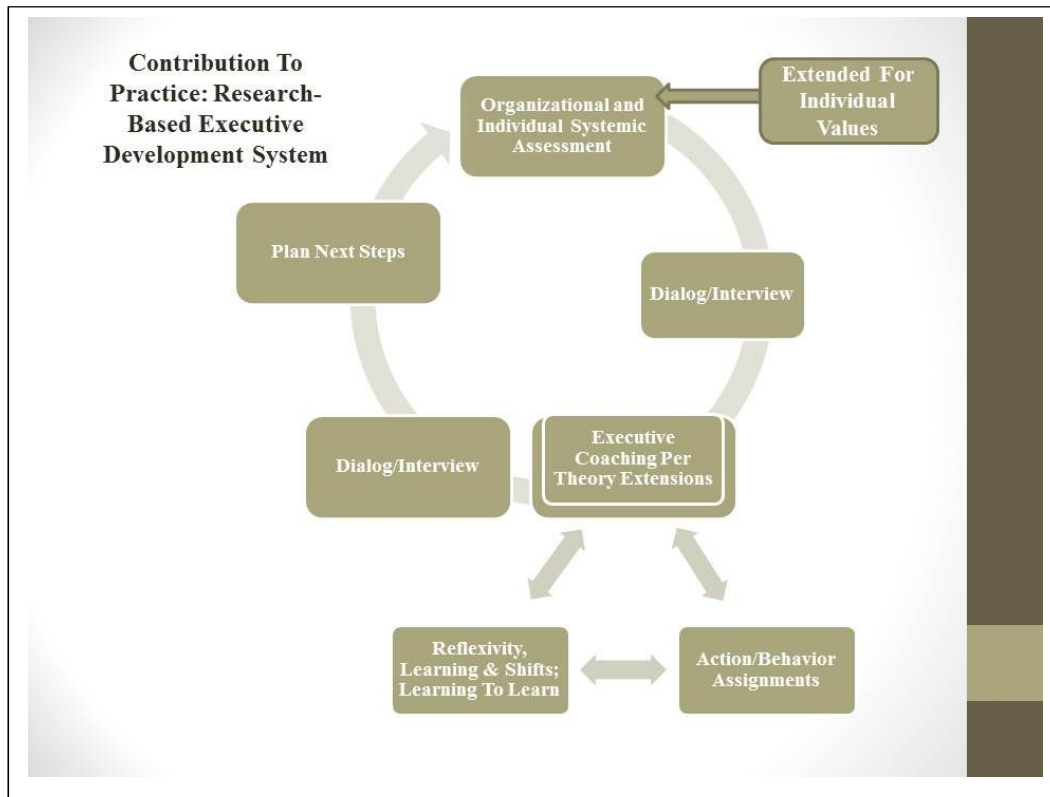
Its promise to offer better results than existing theories lies in the following arguments and theoretical propositions around:

1. The Focus on a Specific Level Executive (top three levels of leadership pipeline) – focusing on the top three levels of the leadership pipeline is essential for today’s fast-paced, always changing culture. Learning agility development for these executives offers stronger organizational results and more robust mentoring for subordinates around the executives’ learning agility capacities.
2. A Systematic Process – Executives in this research articulated a need for structure and systems within their organizations and the insights from this research.
3. An Expanded Executive Coaching Construct – Expansion/extension of the professionally accepted executive coaching construct involves a blend of inquiry, dialog, direct communication and reflection. Such an extension offers a stronger foundation for self-discovery moments.
4. The Opportunity For Reflexivity – Per above, the theoretical extensions around coaching offer opportunity for deeper learning through critical moments and the movement of tacit to explicit knowledge.

8.2 Contributions to Practice: Senior Executive Development

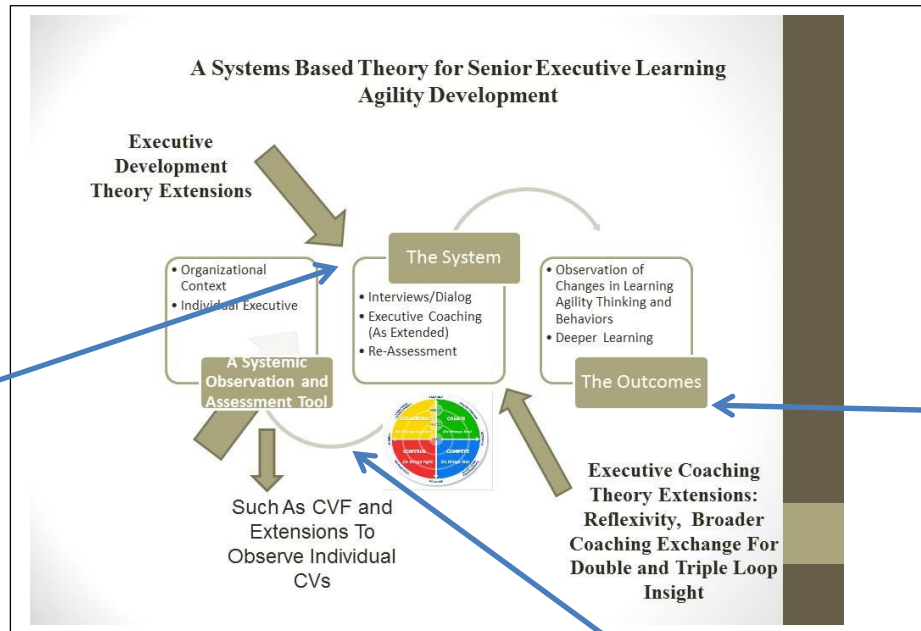
A major contribution to practice is found in the executive development methodology resulting from this study. It is shown and described below:

Figure 8-2 Contribution To Practice: Learning Agility Executive Development System



The Executive Development methodology contribution and the connection of theory to practice is described as follows:

Figure 8-3 Connection of New Theory To New Practice Methodology



Step 1. Individual Values Framework. Through dialog and interviews individual executive competing values are determined. As assessment (new or extension/modification to CVF) is used to baseline and further observe change.

Step 2. An Organizational Systemic Framework. A competing values assessment (or similar framework) is administered to reveal the contextual competing values. This also serves as a baseline for the organizational context.

Step 3. Further Structured Interviews and Dialog. Further interviews and dialog around findings in Steps 1 and 2. The interview provides insight to the coach as well as the executive and surfaces specific challenges for the executive coaching step. Structured Interview 1 in the Appendix serves as a starting point/template for this artifact.

Step 4. Executive Coaching(as extended) . This step would be based on inputs from the first three steps and would incorporate theoretical extensions to coaching. Action/behavioral assignments as well as belief shifts would be evaluated continuously, providing for several cycles in the system before moving to Step 5. In other words, the coaching process would inherently include ongoing dialog couple with formal coaching (using best practice competencies and skills) until the client has identified and demonstrated progress. The executive coaching questions in the Appendix serve as a starting point for this artifact.

Step5. Dialog/Interview Plus Assessment. At this point another interview is takes place, Structured Interview 2. This interview further explores changes as well as identifies on-going learning agility development options. This information is used in conjunction with a second assessment, using the same assessment as in Step 2. A starting point for designing the Structured Interview 2, questions emerge from the combined Appendix artifacts: Structured Interview 2 and Structured Interview 3. These steps may be repeated until the senior executive is satisfied.

8.3 Further Research

Despite the contributions, many opportunities for further research emerge from this study. Among the opportunities are:

1. Use of the Competing Values Construct for Individuals. While the adaptation of the Competing Values Framework is supported (Neher & Mathiassen, 2012), a specific adaptation around individual competing values is only theorized at this point. Research is needed to determine the practical manifestations of the model for use in a dynamically constructed assessment.
2. Executive Development. Research that focuses on specific executive level learning agility development by profession would add significant knowledge to the research domain of this study. For example, research which addresses senior executives in the medical field could contribute to the very complex and uncertain world of medicine. Or perhaps, senior military leaders, senior leaders in transportation, etc.
3. Longitudinal Study – A long term study would significantly extend this study as well as provide new theoretical foundations for executive development around learning agility. A minimum one-year time frame, consisting of at least six action research cycles and/or a multiple case-study approach are suggested for this approach to further research.
4. Double and Triple Loop Coaching – Another space for further research is the implication that learning agility is enhanced through processes that contribute to deeper learning. More research about reflexivity and the movement of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is needed.
5. Finally, perhaps quantitative research and/or additional measurement techniques would substantiate the capacity for leaders to ‘learn to become agile’

8.4 Limitations and Alternative Explanations

With any research, there are always anticipated limitations. One limitation of this research relates to the fact that only one leadership theory/framework is involved: The Competing Values Leadership Framework. Limitations also exist with regard to the untested basic learning style of the participants—their predispositions to the research approach are a factor that could influence findings. No baselines around this issue were included.

Another limitation involves the measurement of concrete executive development and growth through the short-term executive coaching experience. This was a qualitative study, using observation and interpretation via qualitative artifacts to address outcomes. That said, the diagnostic as well as developmental components provided a credible framework for research, insights and contribution. Regarding the timeline of the research, specifically with respect to expectations around executive coaching outcomes, time line was aggressive from several perspectives. In addition to the question of reasonableness, perhaps a more important issue involves the potential to make relevant observations and findings given the 2-3 month plan, and a two-cycle intervention. While the action research process could conceivably result in findings that indicate additional intervention(s), sufficient data and observation from the two planned interventions did result due to the following:

1. The Nature and Definition of the Executive Coaching Process/Model. – By comparison to other growth and development models, particularly the mentoring and therapy models, coaching offers an accelerated process. This claim is made on the basis of the profession's defined competencies and skills which include the following (www.coachfederation.org) :
 - a. In the category of facilitating learning and progress
 - i. Promotes active experimentation and self-discovery, where the client applies what has been discussed and learned during sessions immediately afterwards in his/her work or life setting,

- ii. Helps the client "Do It Now" during the coaching session, providing immediate support,
 - b. As part of widely accepted coach training material, the skill of ‘laser informing’ is developed in the coach as a method for providing ‘instant insight’ to the client. Laser informing has to do with transferring information to the person being coached. It is done through concise, clear messages (less than 8 words)—not lengthy discourse. It is a way of getting targeted messages across with as few words as possible and is designed to quickly produce an ‘aha moment’ that results in rapid change. Further, there is a branch of coaching called ‘laser coaching’. From <http://managementhelp.org/leadingpeople/coaching.htm#anchor2978808>, ‘Laser coaching involves one or a few coaching sessions to address an urgent and/or very specific issue. It also can be used to demonstrate the coaching process to a potential client. It's also useful for very busy people who are reluctant to commit to a long-term program.’
2. Other Research Which Supports a Short Term Time Frame – Feldman and Lankau (Feldman & Lankau, 2005) note in their article that ‘although executive coaching has been defined in a variety of ways by different authors, researchers typically define it as a short –to-medium-term relationship between....’. They further refer to a study by Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (Olivero et al., 1997) where they ‘examined executive coaching as a transfer-of-learning tool. The authors conducted an action research project with 31 managers in the public sector; these participants received executive coaching for two months...’
- In an article by Grant, Curtayne and Burton (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009), they note that ‘Findings indicate that short-term coaching can be effective, and that evidence-based executive coaching can be valuable as an applied positive psychology in helping people deal with the uncertainty and challenges inherent in organizational change.’

3. The Researcher's Experience As An Executive Coach – This researcher has provided more than 2500 hours of coaching since 2001. During that time, records and diaries of the clients' progress support their commitment to immediate action, another core concept embedded in the executive coaching definitions and constructs. Action and its potential to impact behavioral and belief change is a contractual expectation in a coaching relationship.
4. The Context of This Research - While the focus of this research is learning agility development for executives, the measurement and observation of that development has been connected to complex learning, based on structured interviews and paradox integration capacity. In addition, the introduction of reflective judgment and the leadership pipeline enhance a diagnostic component with regard to current levels and future potential of the participants. All of that said, the need to observe and measure concrete behavior change is mitigated for this research, a factor which alleviates the need for longer term coaching interventions. In other words, this research does not focus so much on immediate change and transformation outcomes as it does on the exploration of the process to impact change and transformation.

Finally, there are limitations to the Action Research methodology. The close link between action research and consulting, combined with the strong qualitative nature of the process, create a number of obstacles, if not limitations. Among the obstacles are issues around academic publication.

According to Baskerville (R. Baskerville et al., 1996). Baskerville notes that the strong participatory nature dilutes full control by the researcher, often providing opportunity for the client/participant to direct both theory and practice. Such a reality requires a commitment from the researcher to complete the research, despite potential frustrations and changes in direction.

Alternative explanations regarding the outcomes are also possible. Influencers regarding outcomes could be the general predisposition of the participant executive to the Socratic learning model or resistance to the coaching model and/or the skill of the coach.

8.5 Generalizability

Generalizations from this research are possible, though also with certain limitations. It is posited that the question focused executive coaching constructs could be generalized to other development spaces (such as teacher development). The methodology might also be generalized to frameworks other than CFV, as noted with opportunities for further research. While there are a number of possible options for generalizability, caution is prescribed indicating a need for careful attention to construct, concept and premise definitions to ensure logical alignment.

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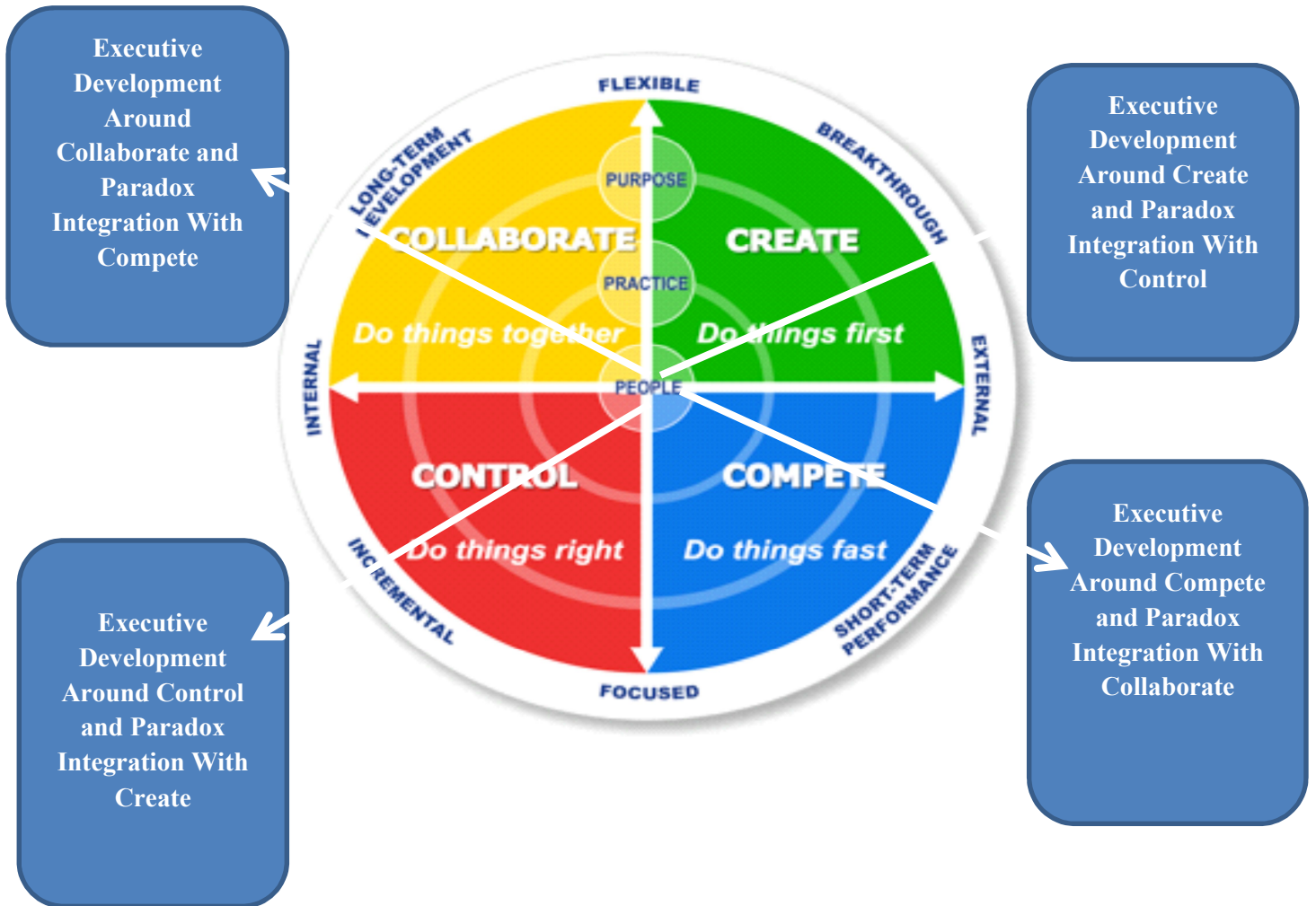
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10 APPENDIX

10.1 The Competing Values Model Map



10.2 Executive Coaching Questions Template: Starting Point For Methodology

NOTE 1: By definition and the nature of coaching, 1) Not all of these questions will be used in any one coaching session, 2) other questions will be derived from and through the coaching conversation.

NOTE 2: Many questions taken from (Olson, 2004) with permission.

1. Tell me about your career—your jobs, the work you did in each, achievements, key challenges, and key learning's.
2. Talk about your current position. What are your current issues, challenges, and achievements? What does your calendar look like? What skills do you rely on most to get the job done? What beliefs govern your work?
3. What are your career aspirations?
4. How do you view your customers, competitors, and other external factors?
5. How do you manage complexity?
6. How do you view other functions in the organization?
7. How visible are you? How do you create visibility for yourself?
8. How do you plan for your perceived people resources?
9. Tell me about your communication style? How do people respond to your communication?
10. Tell me about your team? How did you assemble it? What are some strengths and weaknesses?
11. How do you maximize the use and potential of your people?
12. How do you view technology?
13. Tell me about your financial expertise. How do you see your organization maximizing profit with capital efficiency? How do other functions within the organization contribute to your financial plans and goals?
14. How would you describe the mix between the amount of time you spend with people and the amount of time you spend on tasks?
15. Describe your organizational culture. What about it energized you? What about it de-energizes you?
16. How do you simplify complexity?
17. What questions are you asking yourself? About strategic direction? About customers and markets? About products? About costs and expenses? About your organization? About your people?
18. How are you developing your people?
19. What / who do you need to be asking for?
20. Describe your decision making process?
21. How do you view the success of your peers? Other people?
22. How do you determine what to delegate and to whom?

23. How do you create the right mix of people and businesses?
24. How do you evaluate the strategies of your business managers?
25. How do you select the right people for the right job? Assess them?
26. What are some 'big picture' issues that you deal with and how do you view these? Things such as compliance, allocation of capital, strategic differentiation, potential opportunities?
27. How do you anticipate where the business is going?
28. How much direction do you give to your functional managers?
29. Describe your relationship with the corporation and its leadership.
30. How would you describe your time span view of the future for your organization?
31. How do you identify new opportunities?
32. What developmental assignments would you give yourself?
33. What additional training and development do you need?
34. How do you coach and mentor others?
35. How are you measuring performance of your group executives?
36. How might you give yourself more freedom to think 'outside the box'?
37. How do you envision your future? The future of your organization?
38. How do you know that you know? Don't know?
39. What do you do when you don't know?
40. How do you synthesize seemingly opposing ideas? Or do you?
41. What are some options with regard to growth and development activities regarding this issue?
42. What kind of experience(s) would help you grow? How can you ensure that you get these experience(s)/
43. What is step 1 for you?
44. When will you take action regarding Step 1?
45. What could stop you from taking that action?
46. How can you mitigate these potential obstacles?
47. On a scale from 1 – 10, how important is it for you to take this action? Do this experience?
48. On a scale from 1 – 10, how committed are you to take this action? Do this experience?
49. What do you want to be able to report during our first follow up conversation?
50. How will you know that you are making progress? What are the markers?
51. Reflect on one of the questions/discussions we have had in this executive coaching session.
52. What process do you go through, if any, to question assumptions—in any area?
53. What developmental needs would you identify for yourself?
54. What about this process interests you the most? Why?
55. What else would you like to discuss/address?
56. Other relevant questions that may be derived/developed from answers/discussion during the executive coaching session.

10.3 International Coach Federation Research-Relevant Competencies

ICF Competency Category: Powerful Questioning - Ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit to the coaching relationship and the client

Asks questions that reflect active listening and an understanding of the client's perspective,

Asks questions that evoke discovery, insight, commitment or action (e.g., those that challenge the client's assumptions),

Asks open-ended questions that create greater clarity, possibility or new learning

Asks questions that move the client towards what they desire, not questions that ask the client to justify or look backwards.

ICF Competency Category: Facilitating Learning: Creating Awareness and Designing Actions

Invokes inquiry for greater understanding, awareness and clarity

Helps clients to discover for themselves the new thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, moods, etc. that strengthen their ability to take action and achieve what is important to them

Asks the client to distinguish between trivial and significant issues, situational vs. recurring behaviors, when detecting a separation between what is being stated and what is being done.

Brainstorms and assists the client to define actions that will enable the client to demonstrate, practice and deepen new learning

Engages the client to explore alternative ideas and solutions, to evaluate options, and to make related decisions,

Promotes active experimentation and self-discovery, where the client applies what has been discussed and learned during sessions immediately afterwards in his/her work or life setting,

10.4 Bloom's Level 5 and 6 Learning

Level	Definition	Sample Verbs
Level 5- Synthesis	Student originates, integrates, and combines ideas into a product, plan or proposal that is new to him or her.	Create, design, hypothesize, invent, develop
Level 6 - Evaluation	Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria	Judge, recommend, critique, justify

10.5 The CVF Assessment Tool-From www.competingvalues.com



As Used In The Research From The Competing Values Site

Name:

Date:

Remember that for each of the six questions, statements A, B, C, and D must be assigned a 1, 2, 3 or 4.

No statement may be assigned the same number as another statement.

Section 1 -- Desired Purposes (Outcomes, or the value your organization intends to create)

1. My team (or unit) needs to define success as . . .

- ___ A. excelling in retaining our best employees.
- ___ B. excelling in developing unique products or services.
- ___ C. excelling in reducing time to market of products/services.
- ___ D. excelling in our percent of on-time deliveries.

2. My team (or unit) needs to define success as . . .

- ___ A. excelling in our employee morale.
- ___ B. excelling in the number of new sources of revenue created.
- ___ C. excelling in the amount of cash we have on hand (cash flow).
- ___ D. excelling in internal cost savings.

3. My team (or unit) needs to define success as . . .

- ___ A. excelling in the number of top quality people we have hired.
- ___ B. excelling in the return on investment from our innovations.

___ C. excelling in profitability (return on assets).

___ D. excelling in improving on error rates.

4. My team (or unit) needs to define success as . . .

___ A. excelling in the development of teams.

___ B. excelling in obtaining revenues from new products or services.

___ C. excelling in increasing shareholder value (EVA).

___ D. excelling in our reduction in redundancy and waste.

5. My team (or unit) needs to define success as . . .

___ A. excelling in getting a return on investment from our training and development of employees.

___ B. excelling in expanding the diversity of products and services.

___ C. excelling in increasing our stock price.

___ D. excelling in reducing rate of defects.

6. My team (or unit) needs to define success as . . .

___ A. excelling in reducing grievances and complaints from employees.

___ B. excelling in increasing the number of products and services launched.

___ C. excelling in our overall performance ranking in the industry.

___ D. excelling in quality improvement.

Section 2 -- Current Practices (Culture, competencies and processes of the organization)

1. Dominant Characteristics

___ A. The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.

___ **B.** The organization is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.

___ **C.** The organization is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement oriented.

___ **D.** The organization is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do.

2. Organizational Leadership

___ **A.** The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.

___ **B.** The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovating, or risk-taking.

___ **C.** The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify an aggressive, results-oriented, no-nonsense focus..

___ **D.** The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.

3. Management of Employees

___ **A.** The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus and participation.

___ **B.** The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk-taking, innovation, freedom and uniqueness.

___ **C.** The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands and achievement.

___ **D.** The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability and stability in relationships.

4. Organizational Glue

___ **A.** The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to the organization runs high.

___ **B.** The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.

___ **C.** The glue that holds this organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal

accomplishment. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes.

___ **D.** The glue that holds the organization together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.

5. Strategic Emphasis

___ **A.** The organization emphasizes human development. High trust, openness and participation persists.

___ **B.** The organization emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new

things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.

___ **C.** The organization emphasizes competitive action and achievement. Hitting stretch targets and winning in the marketplace are dominant.

___ **D.** The organization emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control and smooth operations are

important.

6. Criteria of Success

___ **A.** The organization defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork,

employee commitment and concern for people.

___ **B.** The organization defines success on the basis of having the most unique or newest products. It is a product leader and innovator.

___ **C.** The organization defines success on the basis of winning in the marketplace and outpacing the competition.

___ **D.** The organization defines success on the basis of efficiency. Dependable delivery, smooth scheduling and low cost production are critical.

Section 3 -- Current Personal Approach (You, a leader, an individual)

NOTE: For Purposes of the Research, Only Section 3 Output—Personal Approach—was applicable and used in the analysis.

1. Currently, I approach work by...

- ☐ A. communicating openly and honestly.
- ☐ B. out-performing competitors.
- ☐ C. analyzing the facts.
- ☐ D. developing an inspiring vision.

2. Currently, I approach work by . . .

- ☐ A. showing concern for others.
- ☐ B. delivering results.
- ☐ C. maintaining consistency and reliability.
- ☐ D. fostering optimism.

3. Currently, I approach work by . . .

- ☐ A. increasing employee morale.
- ☐ B. taking charge and requiring results.
- ☐ C. solving problems logically and systematically.
- ☐ D. identifying new opportunities.

4. Currently, I approach work by . . .

- ☐ A. fostering cooperation and consensus.
- ☐ B. winning through speed.
- ☐ C. clarifying policies and procedures.
- ☐ D. thinking creatively.

5. Currently, I approach work by . . .

- ☐ A. listening to others.

___ **B.** making firm decisions.

___ **C.** getting the details right.

___ **D.** initiating change.

6. Currently, I approach work by . . .

___ **A.** developing and coaching others.

___ **B.** driving toward deadlines.

___ **C.** controlling costs.

___ **D.** maintaining flexibility.

10.6 Participant Structured Interview 1

Interview Date:

Interviewee:

1. Describe your current organizational role. What is your title?
2. How long have you been in this role?
3. Describe one new situation that you were faced with when you were moved into this role. Something you had never been faced with before. How did you handle it?
4. Describe aspects of the role that are most rewarding. Unrewarding.
5. Describe the top two most complex issues you are dealing with? How are you addressing these issues?
6. Describe if/how you learn from experience? How do you bounce back from setbacks?
7. What other learning styles do you resonate with and why?
8. How do you deal with ambiguous/unclear situations?
9. How would you describe your people skills?
10. On a scale from 1 – 10, where do you land with respect to your capacity to deal with change. Why do you place yourself at that point?
11. Describe an assignment that challenged/stretched you and what you learned from it.
12. Other questions derived from answers/discussions around the above.
How do you spend your time?

10.7 Participant Structured Interview 2

Interview Date:

Interviewee:

1. How would you describe our first Executive Coaching session?
2. What appealed to you most? Least?
3. From your personal Competing Values Framework Pre-Assessment, where were you placed on the quadrants after the first assessment? Do you agree with this? Why or why not? The second assessment?
4. If there is a difference in the color mix between the first assessment and the second assessment, what would you attribute that to?
5. How/what did you learn from the experience we set up during the executive coaching session?
6. Since our last meeting, what new challenges have been brought to you in your work environment? How did you handle them?
7. Look at one of the quadrants that changed on the 2nd Competing Values Assessment. What thought processes are you aware of that allowed you to add more of that quadrant characteristics to your leadership profile?
8. Why do you think you were able to make the shifts in thinking that facilitated these changes? How do you normally adapt to change with minimal stress?
9. What were some key breakthroughs, ah-ha's for you during or after executive coaching?
10. What are the most complex issues you are dealing with now and how are you dealing with them? Describe the levels needed for each of these:
 - a. Adaptability/Flexibility
 - b. Problem Solving
 - c. Self-Awareness
11. Other questions derived from answers/discussions around the above.
 - a. How aware were you before we started this research of your learning agility skills?
 - i. Your capacity to apply experience to new situations
 - ii. Your capacity to be agile and reflective
 - b. Now that you are aware of this how/do you think that insight will accelerate your development
 - c. How do you think your heightened awareness of your learning agility traits would accelerate your development?
 - d. How far do you look into the future?
 - e. What is your career progression.
 - i. When/If that happens how will you spend your time differently? How far into the future will you look?
 - f. What is the value of self-discovery? What have you discovered?

10.8 Participant Structured Interview 3

Interview Date:

Interviewee:

1. How would you describe our second Executive Coaching session?
2. What appealed to you most? Least?
3. From your personal Competing Values Framework Second Assessment, where were you placed on the quadrants? Do you agree with this? Why or why not? The third assessment?
4. If there is a difference in the color mix between the second assessment and the third assessment, what would you attribute that to? How do you reconcile the apparent polarities in the quadrants?
5. How often do you question your peer or supervisory assumptions and actions? Describe some of these instances?
6. Describe a situation since our last meeting where you needed to shift direction and create a new approach to solving the problem. If any. If not, what may you be facing now that would require such flexibility?
7. What experiences would be helpful to you with regard to your development and growth? How did the experience we created during our last coaching session align with your desire/need for experiential learning?
8. What questions/reflections from our last session helped open up new ways of thinking for you, if any? How?
9. What are some reasons the executive coaching approach to your development might be positive? Negative?
10. If you were faced with a major and very complex problem tomorrow, how might our work together to date impact the way you will approach it?
11. Describe some stressful situations and how you managed them?
12. Other questions derived from answers/discussions around the above.
 - a. What have you learned through this process so far? What behaviors will be different as a result of our sessions?
 - b. Name/describe some things that you would say you self-discovered. That were aha's. Things that created a shift in how you think/ behave,
 - c. How/why did these self-discovered shifts impact your development as a leader?
 - d. What have you learned about yourself as a result of this process—as an executive leader or any other learning about yourself?
 - e. How did the process help you learn to learn?
 - f. What new challenge has surfaced since our last session and how will you approach or address it? If nothing new, how about one we have already discussed.
 - g. As an executive who has exhibited many learning agility traits note how you think you are doing with the following—High/superior, Medium/good, Low/needs development
 - i. Learning from experience and application to new situations
 - ii. Capacity for both-and thinking; less polarization
 - iii. Dealing with change—facing it or managing it
 - iv. Managing complexity and uncertainty; ambiguity
 - v. Adaptability/Flexibility
 - vi. Resilience

- vii. Reflection and complex thinking
- h. Tell me about a time you applied your favorite approaches to a situation and it did not work.
- i. What do you see as your major developmental need to be successful in your current or next assignment?
- j. Regarding the competing values, our sessions revealed some individual competing values such as: relationship vs. task. Those that are your personal competing values. Based on the concept of competing values, how might you approach synthesizing or managing your own competing values?
- k. How do you view time as a result of our sessions? What changes in perspective and/or behavior do you see a need for?
 - i. How you use your time?
 - ii. How far into the future you look and ponder?

10.9 Researcher/Participant: Diary Excerpts

In addition to a specific research role, the Action Research principles include a participant role for the researcher. As such, the researcher made routine diary entries, designed to note observations and thoughts throughout the process. Selected diary entry quotes are included below as part of the data collection/results:

These were the diary entries for Participant 1 Cycle 1 Interview 1, December 7, 2012.
We met in Participant 1's conference room at his office in D.C. on Friday morning. The place was quiet and conducive to the research session. I gave a brief and limited overview of the research design to give him some context but not enough to compromise the research and introduce bias. We discussed the IRB and informed consent which we signed and made copies; each of us has a copy.

After these preliminaries, we proceeded with structured Interview 1 per appendix. The questions on this as well as the coaching questions had been pre-designed as much as possible with latitude to adjust as needed in the moment and to the extent that the research is not compromised. I was aware of my need to be intellectually alert and mentally agile to conduct this session, according to the research design and with the participant's information providing further direction and insight. In other words, to move in the moment with what I was learning and observing but not to stray from the research design. So, I found my brain running on multiple tracks concurrently.

Participant 1 was easy to interview. He offered substantial information and expanded on his answers to the questions with good insight. He has had an impressive career now at the executive level with major responsibility over teams who manage the global nuclear treaty for the United States Government. His career transition points align with the literature and changes that take place as executives move through their careers.

I was aware that the challenges he faces also align with the research in the Literature Review which suggest the need for such things as reflective judgment metacognition, paradox integration, et cetera, all a part of the theoretical foundation and related elements. In other words, these were complex challenges requiring mental agility constructs such as dealing with ambiguity and change.

The Executive Coaching Session 1 with Participant 1. *The Executive Coaching session with Participant 1 was conducted in the same environment and focused on his complex dilemma of a needed culture shift or change from a culture of assuming and telling the customer's solutions to asking more and listening more to the customer. Added to the complexity is the issue of geographic location. There are three customer locations*

further adding to the complexity is a staff of old timers whose capacity for change and interest in change is nominal at best. Many are just waiting out to retirement.

Participant 1 wants to garner buy-in by presenting a strategy that helps people understand where they are going and where they fit. He is concerned about resistance. A point to discuss further is how he learned that listening is important. What that experience of learning to listen can do as he transfer his learning experience to the new situation. We might also explore how he can promote both- and that is, how can non buy-in and moving forward with Participant 1 agenda coexist?

This is Cycle 1 Session 1 interview with Participant 2 conducted on December 14, 2012. We conducted the research session in a conference room at the J. Mack Robinson School of Business. Participant 2 is from an academic environment and appreciates research.. We initiated the session by explaining about the research as with Participant 1 in a limited way so as to preclude as much bias as possible. We then went over the informed consent signed and copied before beginning the actual interview. Using several questions from structured interview one, we first covered Participant 2's career progression noting many career cross points that bring him to a current level of executive leadership as assistant dean at a major university.

Among the recent challenges in his later roles was a shift which added a teaching role to his plate. When that happened, he was also administering a major grant and working on a dissertation. He noted that dealing with changes in new situations was mostly successful through his learning style of relationships. Books and reading help but people are his best option.

(Note, as a friend and colleague, I have noticed that he is in fact a prolific reader and has hundreds of books in his office) That said, he has taken the experience of learning through relationships and applied it to all his new scenarios. He is also self-aware of his innovative creative assets.

This is Cycle 1 interview session one with Participant 3 held on January 1, 2013. Again, we started with the structured interview which generated some relevant coaching topics for the research. We met in Participant 3's office at his company preceded by lunch in the corporate cafeteria. Over lunch, I conducted the preliminaries explaining as much about the research as possible without compromising bias. We also covered the informed consent and signed the documents. During the interview, Participant 3 was quite helpful in describing his complete career progression. I was aware of his own strong self-awareness, a key learning agility trait. It was also clear that he has experienced many career cross points, the most recent of which brings him into an executive leadership level at his current company. He has direct functional responsibility over a team in and 1,700 restaurants as relates to hospitality. He also exhibited a strong propensity to learn from experience and apply to new experiences using mental agility constructs to reframe and reapply. I was aware of my intent interest in his intellectual articulation and clarity

of direction. In the course of the interview, we uncovered two key areas of challenge as possible focal points for coaching. We settled on his immediate need to form a team.

This is Cycle 1 Executive Coaching session one for Participant 3. The focus on creating a team was helpful and provided opportunity to explore Participant 3's approach and thinking. As it turns out, this is the first time since his military career that he has had direct responsibility to build a highly functional team. I noticed his strength of clarity around what he wants and how he plans to go about it. That said, the approach seems to be a traditional typical straightforward approach to team building. I did not notice such things as innovation and creativity about building a team. However, the need for same is apparent with regard to the outcomes needed for the team. Buy-in at the restaurant level to the need for a concept of hospitality is key. Herein is the challenge and possible both-and. It is this, how to get the team to operate and function as a team and get results the team is supposed to get.

This is Cycle 2 Interview 2 for Participant 1 held on February 8, 2013. We met at his office location again, in DC. The place was quiet and conducive to do the research. I was aware of my intentionality to guard the research from the standpoint of not revealing too much about what I was looking for or at. Such an effort made it difficult for me or Participant 1 to connect too many dots. Hence, despite the structured interview of questions and my enhancements following Cycle 1 learning, the interview and later the coaching seemed nonlinear and somewhat undirected. I convinced myself that it was better to leave this alone rather than to try to make it more cohesive for the sake of the integrity of the research.

My hope was that ideas about constructs in the research including self-discovery would emerge anyway. That did happen. But my challenge as a participant in the research was to learn to be comfortable with this and at least indirectly let the other participant design by default if not by clear direction. Because I have not yet studied the transcript for this session, I'm not sure just how the analysis and subsequent conclusions will go. I need to be careful to keep my advice out as much as possible.

The coaching part of the cycle also seemed choppy due partly to my efforts to address the cycle 2 theoretical enhancement. The fine line between following generally accepted coaching principles such as client agenda and having an agenda of my own, mainly the research was tough to keep. But the good thing is that I was aware. I had this tape running in the background and feel good about my efforts to maintain the dual objectives, a both-and paradox itself for myself and a big aha. I was myself as a participant in the research experiencing such things as dealing with ambiguity, paradox integration, managing complexity, metacognition, reflective judgment and others. I was therefore experiencing executive development, namely, learning agility as the coach and as I was coaching and realized I can operate at a higher level as a coach.

This is Cycle 2 interview session two for Participant 2 . February 21, 2013. Cycle 2 for Participant 2 was held again at the J. Mack Robinson Buckhead Center. The interview

portion, we were slightly more cohesive than Cycle 2 with Participant 1. I'm not sure why because the same awareness for me was in play. That is maintain the integrity of the research as much as possible without leading questions and with no little or no info to the participant about what was going on in the research. The executive coaching portion on the other hand seemed to be really different. The issue for the prior session was not in his front burner and somehow we ended up coaching around some of his personal competing values. It was not until we reached the end of the session that I reflected and can say that I realized the value of where we had gone with respect to the research itself.

Again, as a participant engaged scholar, I had my own aha. Perhaps even a foundation for the theory practical contribution section. By this, I mean, that the CVP as used by the DeGraff and all in the context of organizational value and innovation. Although adopted by many for other uses in context, it could also perhaps be viewed as a meta-construct. One which would allow for the dynamic creation of various competing value constructs and a related assessment on the fly.

From my participant, he recognized through the coaching that he was living into a lower level value while espousing his higher level values which competed. Specifically, his life was off balance because of saying "yes" too much because of his value to be liked and to be nice. Hence, an unbearable schedule and time/priority management issue. A higher value is to make a good living with financial leverage on multiple revenue streams. The both-and paradox integration of the two was not addressed but I was aware that it might have been.

This is Cycle 2, session two for Participant 3. February 21, 2013. Structured interview and coaching. We met at his organization again but this time not in his office. We met in the café restaurant on site, not quite as conducive but definitely showed me more of his real world. For example, numerous people passed by to say hello. It did not really interrupt our process because I was able to see Participant 3 in action at some level. Having added a few questions about awareness; that is awareness of learning agility constructs, and how they have contributed already to his executive success, we ended up spending a lot of interview time on the subject. At first, he confused my question on awareness was confused with his general self-awareness as applied in other contexts. The purpose in this line of questioning was to explore the possibility that being aware of one's learning agility skills actually accelerates development of the same, a thought outcome from Cycle 1.

The coaching portion focused on his work with the team from the dilemma complexity of getting the right amount of information and communication without micromanaging, another both-and paradox integration competing value. We discussed several approaches and I was aware of Participant 3's internal conflict. At least, this is my observation, subjective opinion. His military background almost demands standards and procedures in top-down approaches. The consensus culture plus his age 25 to 30 team may not value or appreciate the military style.

This observation confirms my thinking of a more general competing values assessment methodology wherein one might identify their own competing values and then develop strategies or skills to integrate the opposites.